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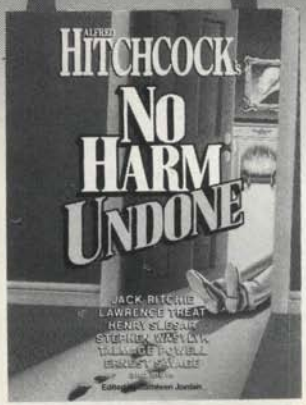

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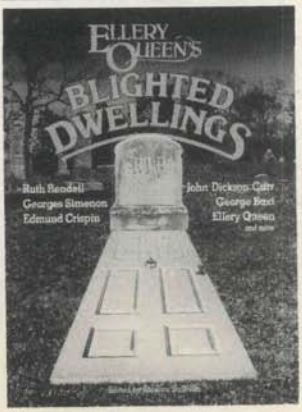

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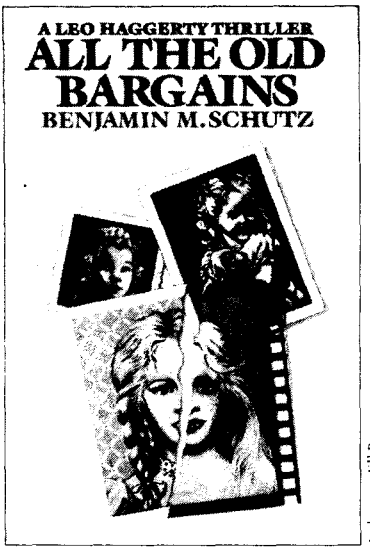

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a *NEW* Sam Train story by

ERNEST SAVAGE

"I'm not on her back," Obrick said. "Occasionally I see her in passing. You can't prevent that."

Sam stared at him bleakly. "Well, I'll have to find a way, won't I?"

"How?"

"Later on that. Why do you do it?"

"I love her."

"But she doesn't love you," Sam said . . .

HELL HATH NO FURY

by ERNEST SAVAGE

His name was Timothy Witherspoon and he had a Witherspoon sort of face—inoffensive, hoping-to-please—and a slight, almost frail body. He was thirty-eight when I first knew him four years ago, and he was a crook, a swindler, and a thief. He had systematically defrauded his employer out of $17,000 over a period of ten months and had gone to jail for it. Whether or not he was still there I didn't know, but all of that and a lot more flashed through my mind when his employer—his nemesis, in fact—dropped by my apartment that Wednesday afternoon. She hadn't phoned first, and for a moment, unwarned, I was speechless—as well as once again enthralled.

"I want to talk to you, Sam," she said, and her smile had lost none of its power. "Also, I want a drink."

The drink, an arid Boodles martini—I remembered precisely how she liked them—was a welcome play for time. When I saw her (which I hadn't done since Witherspoon's trial) or even when I thought of

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her (which I'd done less and less as time passed), there was always a flash of fear and wonder in my mind. And possibly of regret.

She takes her martinis as I take mine, over ice. She rattled the cubes in the big glittering glass and said, "Well, Sam darling, it's been a while, hasn't it?"

"Yes, it has," I said. "But I think I know why you're here, Cecile. I read about it five or six weeks ago in the *Chronicle*. Is he still at it?"

"Yes!" She has a smoky contralto voice that can—when she wants—deliver a velvety snarl.

"What does he do?" I asked. "I read that he sent her notes, telegrams, flowers, and so forth—"

"He still does that, only now he doesn't sign his filthy name. That's all that's changed. For a few days after the court ordered him to cease and desist, he did, and Mirabelle was free of him." She put down her drink and lit a cigarette with swift, nervous hands. Her name was *Madame* Cecile Gautier, and I stress the Madame because she insisted on that. She was born about forty-five years ago in Paris and had come to this country when she was ten. There was still a trace of the Parisienne in her voice. "You remember Mirabelle, of course—"

"Yes, clearly." At fourteen, when I knew her, Mirabelle was piquant, wily, and very French. But sweeter-tempered than this tough, rich, widowed mother of hers. "She's eighteen now, right?"

"Yes. And lovely, Sam."

"Did I read that she goes to San Francisco State?"

"Yes."

"And this—what's-his-name—goes there, too?"

"He did, but he was made to stop. He never attended classes, he just followed Mirabelle around. The court ordered him to stop. His name is William Obrick. A *hun!*"

"An American, you mean, of German ancestry—"

"Sam, please. He's hurting my girl!"

There had been a picture of him in the paper and the accompanying story had alluded to Hinckley—a common point of reference since Hinckley's attempt to kill Reagan. Too common, too easy. But I couldn't remember the boy's face. Wide, wondering eyes? Yes. Short blond hair? Yes. Like Witherspoon, a look of bewildered innocence. He had said, "But I love her." His defense. His *offense.*

"But I love you"—an echo roused in my mind. Four years ago this woman had said that to me. And I had cut and run.

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There were tears now in those big French eyes. They were real. She didn't cry often, easily, or well. Tears destroyed her face and she couldn't permit that, turning her head aside and up, eyes closed. I took the cigarette from between her fingers and snubbed it out in a tray. Her hand caught my wrist and the eyes opened again, darker, smudged.

"You must help me," she said. "You must help Mirabelle. She insisted that I come to you. She adored you, Sam."

"She was practicing on me, Cecile. At fourteen, that's what they do. She missed her father, that's all."

"No, Sam. Paul had been dead for five years then. She's never forgotten you, nor have I."

And vice versa, lady. Almost, but not quite. I had cut and run from millions, from one of the great houses of Pacific Heights—from a life of the kind of ease that will tame or kill you, nothing in between. It would have killed me. *She* would have killed me. I would have become the putative Chief of Security in the dozen corporations she owned or controlled, and maybe I'd have worked at it—but maybe not. She had wanted a mannered stud, not entirely un-at-home in the power world, but I'm a proletarian-type private eye, a street and gutter man. Or so I told myself four years ago.

I had taken the Witherspoon job in the first place because I had nothing else at hand. It's my usual reason for taking a job, but I was lured—we simple-minded proles easily are—by the swanky address. It would be, I was sure, one of those achievements in the building arts that we know by the name of the person who owns it, not the horny-handed anonymities who put it up a mullioned oriel at a time. And it had not let me down—it was a veritable anthology of craftsmanship. Owned by Madame Cecile Gautier.

She was being swindled, she told me then. We were seated facing one another across the slab-of-polished-burl coffee table in her solarium—a controlled jungle, trickling discreet patches of sun, the multi-flowered raceme of a tiger-yellow cymbidium partly framing her head. (She knew how to set herself.)

She owned a pier in Oakland that catered to deep-draft international traffic, and somebody there was ripping her off. Not much so far, but these things must be nipped in the bud—*n'est-ce pas*, Mr. Train? I agreed, but pointed out that a little pilferage, a minor drain of "damaged goods," was one of the established perks in the shipping world, a tradition—almost one of its charms. Hard to change, or root out. Etc.

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From the first minute of that first morning, sex was the subplot of our strung-out drama. Hell, the major theme, and she knew it before I did. But she wanted this thief caught and brought to the bar. Theft was not one of *her* traditions, nor should it be one of mine. Nor was it. Bewitched, I promised to catch the miscreant by the scruff of his wretched neck.

We'd agreed on this, both a little flustered, when Mirabelle came tripping in from school for lunch. I rose to my two left feet and Madame Gautier made the introductions. I got a handshake from the lovely child, a radiant smile, and an impulsive peck on the cheek.

"She likes you," I was told when she'd left, and there was a quantum jump of values in the room. The girl's approval was the final accreditation—she didn't like many of the men her mother introduced her to and she'd never pecked one on the cheek. Madame Gautier told me that at once and was greatly pleased. It was like being validated by an apprentice angel.

Timothy Witherspoon was our man and it took me less than two days to find him out. I was in the guise of an insurance inspector, suggesting this and that against the hazard of fire around the pier. Anyone can do that sort of thing and look real. I had carte blanche issued by the pier manager, a man in cowed awe of his boss, Madame Gautier. She cowed most people, even those not on her payroll. Men, anyway. They saw in her—as I did—the embodiment of classic French sex, than which there is none more cowing, more enticing, nor more disruptive.

Witherspoon broke down easily. He lacked professionalism, a criminal mind—qualities he would acquire, though, plus others, over the next several years. But in the preceding ten months he had chiseled seventeen grand out of Madame Gautier's pier operation through the simple, almost crude falsification of cargo counts.

At dinner on the evening following this modest success, she said to me, "Sam, you were brilliant."

I smiled. "No, Cecile. He was finished before I got there. He was waiting for me, or someone like me. It wasn't so much a confession as a regurgitation—get this bilious lump out of my belly—even though he had the purest motive for theft known to man."

"The daughter, you mean."

"Yes."

His daughter Elizabeth, age seven, had leukemia. She had just emerged from the second remission in the course of the desease. Ten

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days earlier her last bone-marrow specimen showed 75-percent leukemic cells. She had maybe a 5-percent chance to beat the thing, a 20-to-1 shot Witherspoon dismissed with a tired shrug of his shoulders.

"All I wanted to do," he said, "even from the first, was make the rest of her life a little more comfortable. She had maybe eighteen months to begin with, now maybe what—two, three? When she's in the hospital, okay, but when she's home where she wants to be I gotta hire nurses. You wouldn't believe the cost."

His wife and nine-year-old son had been killed in a freak boating accident the previous summer. "No contest," he said, with that same heave of the shoulders. "What the hell, man, I'm in somebody's sights, right? Why fight it?"

He had a round, cherubic face, clear blue eyes, and trim blond hair. Put him in a dark suit and striped tie, you'd have your perfect church usher. We were in a little cubicle off the manager's office at the pier when he told me all this. He didn't get to talk to many people, he said, and he'd enjoyed talking to me. He actually said thanks.

Cecile and I were at Tadich's Grill on California Street, where you eat and drink very high on the San Francisco culinary hog. She was well known there—I wasn't. The arrangement was that I would pay the tab and put it on my expense account. It would run to three impressive figures before the second brandy.

"And what I think you should do," I said, "is not press charges."

She was attacking the claw of a flown-in lobster from the East Coast. She said, "Don't be a fool. I talked to him, too, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"After you left. I found him—well, fascinating."

"Fascinating how?"

"It's hard to say—sort of empty, drained. A sort of pointless man."

"Bereaved, you mean. Alone in the world with a doomed daughter."

"You're too sentimental."

"Sentimental, hell. The medical coverage your insurer provides ran out months ago. Your employees' credit union turned him down for a loan. He had no other recourse."

She cracked the forearm of the lobster's claw and pulled out a scimitar of pink succulent meat. She put it in her mouth and chewed with Gallic pleasure. "Did you know," she said, "that he used almost half the money to buy himself a car?"

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"Cecile, he had no car. The Toyota wasn't insured. A man without a car in this world is a man without legs."

"Are you really such a bleeding heart?"

"No. It's purely a practical matter. His daughter's in the public domain, or will be soon. Whatever can be done for her will be done. At our cost, the taxpayers. Why add to it? You prosecute Witherspoon, he'll go up for three or four years at a cost to each of us of X cents a day. There's no clear way out. Throw him in the can, we support *both* him and his daughter. Fire him—turn him loose, let him get another job—we support just the girl."

"No! Let him go unpunished and they'd run riot over there. You don't understand the working-class mind. It will always, eagerly, bite the hand that feeds it."

"But there's the PR aspect of it," I said (feebly?). "These leukemia kids touch everyone's heart. Do you want to come on as Madame La Farge?"

"That is not a valid analogy and you know it." She licked her lemon-buttered fingers. "He's a thief and he must be treated as one. I can't put up with that sort of thing. They'd eat me alive."

Her house, three doors down from Lyon Street, which borders Presidio on its semi-wild eastern side, was, as I've said, a wonderland of craftsmanship. I walked through the four-foot-wide, gothic-arched, carved, and paneled front door maybe a dozen times in the week I spent with her, and each time I wanted to inspect its varnished sinuosities with my clumsy, untrained hands and pay a solemn obeisance. I loved her house. And I loved the spritely, sunny presence of her daughter Mirabelle. Hell and bedamned, I even loved the woman herself.

Her bedroom—from the back of the house facing the Bay and Golden Gate—was on the third floor. From the front it was on the second, the slope there being that steep. Standing on the balcony of that sybaritic gymnasium, the drop straight down would have been suicidal, but the view was worth the risk. What's a stirring view for if not to rouse hope and fear?

That last night she ordered, "Sam, come in here. I want you." She had said it three, four, five times while I stood out there, feeling the pull of gravity, of a going down. On the seventh or eighth command I responded, striding through that oyster-white decorator's confection of a love-nest, down those curved and honored stairs, and out

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that glorious door into the street, a clear way home. She had screamed, "You can't walk out on me! Nobody walks out on me!"

But I did, even though she still owed me four days' pay plus expenses—something like a thousand. It would have been cheap at twice the price.

Four years later, in my kitchen, I made us each another drink, heavy on the Boodles, merely whispering the word "vermouth." She had written a check in my absence and handed it to me when I got back. It was $2500.

"I owe you some from before," she said blandly, "and certainly should have sent you a check. About a thousand, I think. But pride—" She shrugged and lit another cigarette with slightly shaking hands. "Hell hath no fury, and so forth. But that was long ago. The balance of the check is for now. I want you to stop this—torment of Mirabelle." Her eyes blazed.

"How, Cecile? You should take it back to the law. They can nail him for contempt."

She looked scornful. "You know better than that. It would take months for those ponderous wheels to turn, if they ever did. It took months to stop him the first time. Meanwhile, poor Mirabelle—"

"Send her away. Send her to school in Switzerland or somewhere."

"Give in to him, you mean? No, never!" That snarl again. "Besides, he has money. He'd find her, follow her—he's obsessed! He's crazy!"

I folded the check and put it in my pocket. An acceptance—not for her, but for that lovely child who'd pecked me on the cheek.

Obrick was twenty-three. He lived in a modest apartment on Geary, not far from San Francisco State College—not far from Mirabelle's home. He was five-ten and weighed a hundred and sixty-five. He had blue eyes, blond hair, and a ruddy complexion, a pure Nordic. His parents had died two years ago in an automobile accident back East where he'd been born and raised. From a trust fund set up by them, he currently received $2,975 a month. He had no known relatives in this country, but probably did in Germany. His parents had been born in Cologne, and had immigrated to America in 1955 and gained citizenship in 1969. His paternal grandfather had been an SS officer in the Nazi regime and had hung himself in jail in 1946 while awaiting trial for war crimes. Obrick owned a Honda CX 500 touring bike he'd driven to San Francisco from New York City.

Those were the facts supplied to me, in part by Cecile but mostly

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by her lawyer, George Welch, who'd represented Mirabelle in her petition against Obrick six weeks ago. There were curiosities in it and I asked Welch across his desk, "Did I hear you right? Did his parents die in that accident on the boy's twenty-first birthday, *exactly?*"

"Yes."

"And one week before that they set up the trust fund which now supports him in middle-class comfort?"

"Yes. Ten days, actually. And you are seeing what I saw in it, Sam, a suggestive kind of timing—"

"You bet. Was there any hint of suicide in the parents' deaths? Like maybe they were saying, 'Okay, we made him and we're sorry, but we've arranged to pay his way through life and he's all yours now, world.' Tragedy lurks in all this, George. Did the kid have any kind of a bad-behavior record back East? Cecile flat out called him crazy. Is he?"

"He's what the shrinks call a 'passive-regressive,' whatever the hell that means. But he had two psychiatrists at his hearing who said he was as sane as the judge. Hmmm. But what *he* said, and about all he said, was, 'I love her.' "

"Yeah, I read that in the paper."

"And who can blame him? Have you seen her lately? She's a knockout. Hell, I love her myself."

"Sure, but for you and me it's purely avuncular—or it better be. —What about that SS grandfather?"

"We didn't have occasion to bring him up, so I don't know."

Cecile told me that Mirabelle varied her route to school every day, driving her little Fiesta, a high-school graduation gift. The next morning, a Thursday, she took Divisadero south to Grove and then west to Masonic. I followed in my Dart, a discreet two or three cars behind. Obrick picked her up when she turned on Grove, zooming past me and making a rubbery turn to slip the Honda in behind her car. At the Masonic stop, he pulled alongside the Fiesta a couple of feet to her left. He didn't look at her, he just stared straight ahead. He was wearing a helmet, goggles, and gloves, obeying a law honored mostly in the breech. When she crossed Masonic and turned right a block later on Loyola, I cut him off and sort of herded him a half block along Grove, where he came to a controlled stop against the curb, the Dart fairly well keeping him there.

I got out and he said indignantly, "Hey, man, you almost hit me!"

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"Right. Next time I'll try harder, William. Lock the bike and get in the car. We're gonna have a little talk."

I took him a few blocks south to Fell Street and we found a table in the post-breakfast lull in a coffee shop. I ordered coffee and a doughnut from the Filipino waitress, but he wanted nothing, said he never ate breakfast. He still wore his helmet, his ice-blue eyes intense in the shadow-frame it made around his face. He was stiff-backed, but calm.

"You were ordered by a court of law," I said, "to quit tormenting Miss Gautier. How come you're still at it?"

"I've done nothing wrong," he said. His voice was thin and taut. "I've got as much right to use the city streets as anyone else. Who are you?"

I told him. I told him Mirabelle's mother had hired me to keep him off her back.

"I'm not on her back," he said. "Occasionally I see her in passing. You can't prevent that."

I stared at him bleakly. "Well, I'll have to find a way, won't I?"

"How?"

"Later on that. Why did you do it?"

"I love her."

I listened carefully for resonance in the words—one of the most solemn declarations a man can make—but there wasn't any emotional content. I wished he'd take off his helmet, but sensed that he wouldn't, that it protected more than just his good-looking head.

"But she doesn't love you," I said.

"She hasn't had a chance."

"Yes, she has. She thanked you for those first flowers and candy way back last year and asked you not to send her any more."

"Her mother made her say that."

"No. Her mother thought it was sort of nice at first, but left it up to Mirabelle. It was Mirabelle's decision."

"It was her mother's! It's always been her mother's! If I could once get her alone—"

"What would you do?"

"Make her love me!" There was some heat in his voice now.

"It's a little late for that, William. You scare her. Love and fear don't mix well. Look, why don't you just leave her alone, starting now. For one thing, you're gonna get in serious trouble if you don't."

"What kind of trouble?"

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"Contempt of court, to start with. You know it as well as I do. They can throw you in the slammer and keep you there as long as they want."

"They can't prove anything, though, can they? I don't sign my letters any more, or anything else." A smile danced across his shadowed eyes and danced away again. "She'll learn to love me. I'll *make* her love me!"

He meant it. It was the fixed idea, the axis around which his world spun. Simple persuasion would never change it, so I thought I'd try something else. "Another thing, William, is your physical danger. A while ago I almost hit your bike. If you make me tail you all over town, one of these times we may not be so lucky."

He reared back, the helmet clacking against the wooden partition behind his head. "Is that a threat?"

"No. But it's implied in the tactics you force on me, pal. My job is to keep you from trailing her around. I've got a car, you've got a bike." I shrugged.

"That's a threat!" he said loudly.

"Quiet down. It's not a threat. It's merely a possibility. Accidents happen."

He stood up and pointed at me. "This man threatened to kill me!" The waitress turned and stared. Everybody turned and stared. "He said he's going to kill me!" Then he ran out the front door and the waitress scurried behind the counter, big brown eyes never leaving mine.

I didn't see Obrick all the rest of that day, but I saw Mirabelle after her last class at three o'clock. On the walk outside the building, she put her books down and threw her arms around my neck. People slowed and ogled, mostly boys. She mesmerized male eyes and I understood, as I always had, Obrick's devotion. But with him it was obsessional, sick. She said, "Oh, Mr. Train, thank you so much—I saw what you did this morning." And I got a full-fledged kiss on the cheek.

I followed her Fiesta home and watched her park it in the three-car garage. Her mother's Mercedes wasn't there. Her mother was a working woman, with central offices downtown in the Trans-Am Building.

In the driveway, Mirabelle stood by my open window and pointed uphill at the solid wall of foliage that was the Presidio, an unkempt jungle of trees, underbrush, and weeds. "He lurks up there," she

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said, her face drawn, haunted by it. "Sometimes he lets me see him. On his bike. He waves at me— God!" She closed her eyes. "He comes out the gate at the head of Broadway and drives slowly past the house time and time again. He's got other places he comes through the fence—there are breaks in it. I can't leave the house without him seeing me."

"We'll stop him," I said, with more certainty than I felt. "Go in the house now and quit worrying. You'll see me in the morning—in your rearview mirror."

She went up the walk and through that sculpted front door, turning to smile wanly back at me. She was her mother's daughter, minus the arrogance and steel. But with the dangerous beauty—too much of it a burden, a curse.

I drove up to Lyon Street and parked near where Broadway tees into it. I got out and walked into the Presidio grounds and looked around, listening to silence and seeing nothing—a tire impress in a dusty trail that could've been from his bike, but nothing else. You could hide an army in here. I went back to the car, drove home, and made a drink.

Yesterday Cecile Gautier had knocked on my door unheralded and been allowed in. In the growing number of years I've been a private investigator (since quitting the S.F. Police Force in protest over its one and only strike), not six clients have entered this place. I'm xenophobic about my apartment. I gladly let in friends—the few I have. Clients—who do not often become friends—I meet elsewhere. My listed business phone is an answering-service number, my business address a P.O. box number. My home phone is unlisted.

Four years ago I could have traded this overly protected pad for Madame Gautier's Pacific Heights palacio, and whatever else I would have been, I'd have been Mirabelle's stepfather, charged with her protection. As I was now—and doing poorly at it.

Thursday-evening doldrums, these were, well lubed with Boodles gin. I kept seeing Obrick's helmet-shaded eyes, full of cold obsession and wily cunning. Mad eyes. He would have her, or *nobody* would have her. That was his crystal-clear message—that I had wholly missed.

I phoned the house and told the French-speaking maid who answered to advise Mlle. Mirabelle that Mr. Train would pick her up at eight o'clock in the morning and not to leave the house until then.

"Oui, Monsieur," she said, unquestioning.

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Then I got out and oiled my Walther .38. I hadn't fired it in anger in over a year. That's a long time, and I was angry now.

At seven-thirty Friday morning, I found Obrick's Honda on its side under a bush in the Presidio. I crouched by it, shivering in the cold foggy air. The motor was still warm to the touch. I had the Walther in my hand.

Twenty feet farther along the trail, I found Obrick on his back, dead—shot twice through the chest. He, too, was still warm. The smell of cordite lingered in the damp quiet air, but my first thought was joyous: Mirabelle was free. My second wasn't: This was a frame—I'd been framed. *Get the hell out of here!*

I'd parked the Dart a half block away on Lyon Street and went there at a barely controlled speed. I heard no police siren approaching and saw no gimlet-eyed face at the windows I passed, but surely some nearby householder had reported the early-morning gunshots. In the car, I drove slowly around, windows and ears open, before pulling into the Gautier drive at eight sharp. Mirabelle was waiting. I said, "How's your mom today?"

It drained her smile and she shrugged. "Oh, she's still in bed, I guess. Why are you picking me up like this?"

I looked away from her, backing out of the drive. "Because I wanted to," I said. "Because I like the way you look. But, Mirabelle, if I'm not at school to pick you up this afternoon, take a cab home. You have money?"

"Yes. But why wouldn't you be?"

"Well, there may be reasons," I said. "But, anyway, you're not to worry about Obrick any more, okay?" I would give her that much, even if maybe it *was* too much.

It became a very long day. The Dart, a fading-blue '69 four-door sedan that simply wouldn't quit, would be an easy car to spot in this high-powered, up-to-the-minute town. I took it south along the coast to Daly City, testing the teeth of the trap I was in. Had she done it herself, or hired it done? I could easily see her doing it herself, a *doubly* satisfied snarl on her lips—Obrick dead and Train trapped. Train repaid, his case finally closed.

I ate lunch at a McDonald's in Daly City, then wended my way east across the peninsula to Candlestick Park. The Giants were playing the Dodgers today.

The Giants won, 9 to 4, but I felt no civic pride. I got home at six-

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thirty, and of course they were there. They'd been there all day, and they were mad. They took me away at once—roughly, like the felon I was.

When I quit the force I lost almost every friend I had. Cops don't make many friends who aren't also cops, it's isolating work. So now instead of friends on the force, I had enemies—chief amongst them Captain Pete Welland, leader of the team of three that made the bust. It gave them all terrific pleasure.

"Murder One," Welland said. "Premeditated and paid for—*beautiful!*"

"I talked to the guy one time," I said. "I didn't kill him."

"Bullbleep, Train." I was in a holding cell. Not an interrogation room, but a *holding* cell—a dungeon, just to get me used to it.

"And what do you mean," I said, " 'paid for?' "

"That's point four." He was a cigar smoker. He lit one and blew the fumes in my face. "Point one, you damn near killed him yesterday morning with your car—that was witnessed. Point two, you publicly threatened to kill him in a coffee shop on Fell Street. Your waitress took your license number after you left the place and called us. Point three, you and your car were seen near the murder site last night and this morning."

"Who saw me?"

"Neighbors."

"Any with a French accent? No, never mind. What's this point four again?"

He grinned. "The clincher. Your client, Mrs. Gautier."

"Madame Gautier, Peter."

"Yeah, so she said, but nuts to that. *Mrs.* Gautier offered you twenty-five thousand, with a ten percent advance, to get Obrick off the girl's back. She was *that* disturbed about it and she's *that* rich. But what she meant, for God's sake, was just to run him off, not kill him. She's shocked. She repudiates all connection with you, she won't even see you, she won't let the kid see you—she wishes she'd never heard your goddamn name."

"Yeah, I'm sure." As I was wishing I'd never heard hers. She'd started to say it herself—"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." Four years after the fact, an opportunity for vengeance knocks and she leaps to open the door. I said, "Pete, tell me—how'd I do him in?"

He would play along with me, he held all the cards. He even

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showed friendly. "Sam, you shot him twice through the chest. Probably one of your .38s. We'll have all the details in the morning."

"I've only got one .38—a Walther. It's locked in my car. It hasn't been fired in over a year."

"No, it's *not* in your car—not the gun you used. It's probably in the bay right now. All cops have more than one gun, Sam, you know the drill. I've got five or six myself. Look, we've got motive, we've got opportunity and means. In fact, we've got an airtight case. Think about it from the jury's point of view. Unless you want to confess right now and get it over with. Why not?"

"Because I didn't do it. Madame Gautier did it—or hired it done. She had two good motives, Pete."

"Not as good as yours—a fat fee. You want a lawyer?"

"You should have asked me that before." I grinned. "You've already made a lot of mistakes. But, no, I don't want a lawyer. If you nail me on this thing, which you'd love to do but won't, at least I'll have a buck or two in the bank when I get out. Also, Peter, you forgot to recite the rest of Miranda into my shell-like ear."

"Hell, Sam, you know Miranda by heart. Besides, I'll say I did, I'll lie about it."

"Just like Madame Gautier. You work well together, you two."

The handcuffs had chafed my wrists. Welland had been rough putting them on and rough shoving me in the car. Not brutal, just rough. I'd been rough myself once or twice through the cop years—that bird was now coming home to roost. With a lot more on the wing.

I ate all of a not-bad supper. A jailer got me a Rex Stout paperback. Nero Wolfe, prince of our tribe. I finished it before the lights went out at ten, but didn't go to sleep for hours. Other guys groaned and cursed and snored through the night.

At nine-thirty Saturday morning, Welland came and got me. He looked rumpled and tired, and he needed a shave. We went upstairs to an interrogation room and there, at the scuffed oak table, sat Timothy Witherspoon. He'd grown a small vandyke beard since I'd seen him last and was wearing a fresh blue prison-issue shirt. He smiled as I sat down facing him. Welland slumped into a chair at the end of the table and said, "Sam, Witherspoon's got a story to tell. Tell it, Tim."

Witherspoon blushed and ducked his head shyly. "This Mrs. Gautier? Three or four months after I was in the joint, she started sending

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me presents—wool socks, sweaters, cigarettes. Y'know?" His head came up. "Then—oh, six months later—she started visiting me every few months. She'd bring stuff. Candy. Butts. She was friendly. It worried her I was in the joint, she said. She said she liked me, wanted to help. I don't know—"

I said, "You fascinated her, Tim. She told me that once."

"Yeah, well—maybe. She said you were the reason I was in stir. She said you insisted she prosecute even though she didn't want to, that you were a—well, not a good guy. She said you'd conned her out of a bunch of money—some kind of phony investment." He lit a cigarette, maybe one of hers.

"Then what?" Welland said. "Get on with it, Tim."

"Yeah—well, last December she said you'd, ah, conned her again. For a lot of money. She cried. She had this way of sticking her head up in the air, turning it aside, and crying. She said I'd become her best friend, that she couldn't trust nobody on the outside." He looked desolate.

"But you didn't buy it," Welland said.

"Buy it? How could I buy it? But I played along. I mean, what the hell, she was slippin' me money by then—twenties and fifties in with the packs of socks."

"So?" Welland said.

"So anyway, three weeks ago today I got sprung. Happy day, right?" He grinned at me and shook his head. "She met me at the gate. She'd set me up—apartment, this used car, clothes, what the hell. She wanted to hire me as a bodyguard, something like that. To make amends, she said. Then a week or so ago she says she wants me to hit you, Mr. Train, you being this snake in the grass—"

"But you didn't," I said.

"No. I told her no way, not me, get somebody else. But—"

"But what?"

"I don't know—I was tempted."

"How come, Tim?"

"Look—I'd been in stir four years. A fella gets used to it in four years. Outside it was the same old crap, people rippin' each other off, the goddamn rat race. Who wants it? Not me, man. That's why I'm back here."

"Get on with it, Witherspoon," Welland said again. He looked half asleep.

"Well, four or five days ago she shifts targets on me. Not you, Mr. Train, but this kid Oldbrick. Hit him, she says, and we'll hang it on

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Train. I kept tellin' her I liked you, but she didn't seem to hear me. I mean from the *first* she didn't hear me, just heard herself. What'd you do to her, man? No, I don't wanna know, but she sure as hell hates your guts."

"We got that established," Welland growled.

"Okay, right. So, anyway, she sets the scene—when, where, how, and so forth. She says Oldbrick's gonna kill her daughter unless I get him first. Well, you know the girl, Mr. Train. I mean—a beauty. I had a girl once, too. I mean, I know how she felt. You'd do anything to save your kid, right?"

"Right, Tim," I said.

"Anyhow, she says twenty-five thou for me, cash. But what's twenty-five thou any more, live a year maybe. She gave me two thousand up front, plus a gun, and says the mark'll be in the Presidio early in the morning—he's always there early in the morning waitin' for the girl to show. Quiet, she says, nobody around, wax him quick, get away quick, drop the gun in the bay—" Welland grunted, eyes almost shut— "and go home. Oakland, she'd got me this place in Oakland." He shrugged. "And that's the way it went, easy as pie."

Silence fell. Welland refired a damp cigar, Tim lit another cigarette. I stared at him. "That's it?"

"Yeah, that's it." He looked pleased, relieved, at home.

"No," Welland said, "that's just the Obrick killing. That lets you off the hook, Sam. But tell the rest of it, Tim, and for Christ's sake speed it up."

"Okay, there's not much more. The thing is, Mr. Train, I don't want out, I want back in. I don't like it out here. What've I got out here? No family, no job, no nothin'. I tried to tell the Madame that, but she doesn't hear what she doesn't wanna hear. Also, I knew you weren't a bad guy. I knew she was connin' me. We've got a real first-class bitch here, right? So I futzed around town yesterday after I waxed this nut, saw a couple of shows, ate a big meal, and turned myself in here last night around eleven. Got the poor Captain here outa bed, didn't I?" He smiled again, a man at peace, somehow free.

Welland pressed a button under the table and a uniformed cop came in and took Witherspoon away.

"So that's the way it went," Welland said wearily. "Obrick was due to die, Sam, and I'm shedding no tears for him. He figured to kill the girl if he couldn't have her any other way, and he sure as hell couldn't. We found two guns, three knives—*throwing* knives—a can of rat poison, and a length of hanging rope in the saddlebags on

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his bike. It's a wonder he hadn't already done it." He stood up, yawned, and stretched. "C'mon, let's get you sprung."

We went to the property room to get my stuff and then out onto the street. Bright sun today, no fog. I'd had a taste of jail—and I, like Tim, knew what free was now, and that it's different for each of us. I said, "What about Cecile Gautier, Pete?"

He looked grim. "Yeah, she was in and out of here this morning as though she owned the joint. She had an attorney with her. Some guy with a lion's mane of blow-dried white hair."

"What charge?"

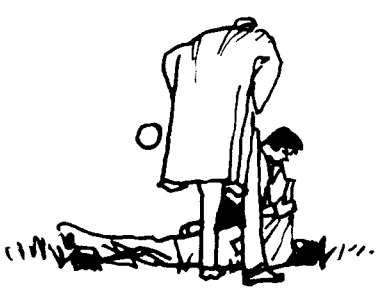
"Conspiracy. Accessory to murder one, before and after the fact. But if you wanna make yourself some money, bet she doesn't spend thirty minutes in the can. Ever."

A cab was cruising by and I waved it to the curb. Welland caught my arm. "Sam, look," he said. "A lot of the guys have had it in for you ever since the strike. Me, too—you on one side, me on the other. Those were bad days, everybody fighting mad. But what the hell, it's been a long time. Let's shove it under the rug where it belongs, what do you say?"

"Okay by me, Pete."

"Nevertheless," he said as I got in the cab, "keep your nose clean, buddy."

He didn't smile, but I did. "Hard to do," I said, "in a town like this."



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Sarah hadn't been so foolish as to elect to spend her hours of truancy in her own local library, but all the same there was just the chance that a neighbor or acquaintance might drop in, might catch sight of her, and then might innocently happen to mention it in front of one or another of the various people Sarah was deceiving. The list of these people was long—and growing longer.

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GUILT FEELINGS

by *CELIA FREMLIN*

The muted rustlings, the gentle inconsequential murmur of the public library on these precious Wednesday afternoons were like a benediction, and for the first few minutes Sarah would simply sit, her book unopened in front of her, and savor the peace of it, the lovely impersonal peace. Better even than solitude was this audience of hushed and shuffling strangers, not one of whom was entitled to come up to her and say, "Can't we go home now?" or "What's for tea?" or "But you said you'd be here by two." No demands. No deadlines. Nobody knowing her from Eve.

Peace. Delicious, incomparable peace. But, of course, peace, like any other commodity, has to be paid for, and in Sarah's case this blissful two hours, from two to four each Wednesday, had to be paid for by sensations of enormous guilt. Or rather—Sarah strove to be honest with herself—enormous fear of being found out. The risk was small, certainly—she hadn't been so foolish as to elect to spend her

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hours of truancy in her own local library—but all the same there was just the chance that a neighbor or acquaintance might drop in, might catch sight of her, and then might easily—albeit innocently—happen to mention this fact in front of one or another of the various people Sarah was deceiving.

The list of these people was long—and growing longer. People were very kind, and, having heard that Sarah's mother-in-law had had to be moved into a Home, they were willing enough to take turns babysitting for her on Wednesday afternoons so that she could go and visit the old lady.

And, to start with, that was exactly what she had dutifully done. Rain or shine, she had caught a bus, and then another bus, to the red brick-building, whose entrance hall, shining with polish and desperate with flower-arrangements, formed an antechamber to realms of such variegated pains and distresses as were hard to comprehend. Down the pale, shining corridors Sarah would make her way, her heels clicking obtrusively, unnervingly on the pale, shining floors until she reached the door behind which Mrs. Kinglake spent her empty and yet laborious days, furiously battling her way through the recalcitrant minutes that blocked the passage between one small happening and the next.

"It's gone quarter-to!" would be the old woman's greeting to her daughter-in-law, and she would brandish her watch—her last remaining weapon against the four corners of the world—under Sarah's contrite eyes. "I've been sitting here waiting for you ever since dinner! You said you'd be here by two!" And Sarah would have to explain—gently, of course, but over and over again—that it was the *babysitter* who came at two—she, Sarah, still had to fit in the journey, the two buses, the waits at the bus stops. And all the while she was speaking so brightly, so soothingly, she would be watching the glazed resentment filming, like cataract, the old eyes. Mrs. Kinglake wasn't listening to a word, not one word. She was simply waiting for Sarah to finish speaking so that she could continue with her grievance just where she had left off.

"Two o'clock!" she would resume as soon as Sarah's excuses had faltered to an end. "Since two o'clock I've been sitting here! I've missed my nap waiting for you, expecting you every minute! I'll be feeling ill all the rest of the day now, missing my nap like this—I'll be worn out!"

"Oh, but, Mother, there's no need!" Sarah would protest, week after week, "I've told you. You must have your nap as usual and if

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you *are* still asleep when I get here, why, I can always wake you up, can't I?" This with a little laugh, to make it sound like a cozy little joke between them.

At this, the old eyes would brighten for a moment, as they always did at the sighting of a new grievance glimmering out of the greyness of the days.

"Wake me up? You don't catch me that way twice! I don't trust you. Nor Graham, either. *I* know what you do when you find me asleep—you tiptoe away again! Yes, you do, don't lie to me!"

It wasn't Sarah who had done this, actually, it was Graham, on one of his Sunday visits to his mother.

"You looked so peaceful, it seemed a shame to wake you," he'd guiltily tried to explain away his defection, but he'd never heard the last of it, and neither had Sarah. It had become one of the staple subjects of conversation during that fairly short stretch of time after Mrs. Kinglake had finished complaining about Sarah's late arrival and before she started complaining about her early departure.

"Can't wait to get away, can you?" she would challenge. "I can't think why you bother to come, I'm sure!" And then, answering her own question: "It's the money, that's what it is! Buttering me up so's I'll leave you all my money, that's what you and Graham are after, isn't it? But don't you be too sure, my girl! I could leave it all to June if I wanted. Yes, I could! She may be only my stepdaughter, but Junie's the one who loves me! Such a lovely girl—never a cross word!"

Easy, thought Sarah, when you lived in New Zealand and only ever sent Christmas and birthday cards with printed greetings—which, true enough, never included any cross words. Well, they wouldn't, would they? Where would be the market for such a card?

"It's all a lot of nonsense, she hasn't *got* a lot of money," Graham had airily assured his wife when she'd reported one of these conversations. "She just likes to pretend she has—it gives her a feeling of power. Well, poor dear, with all her real powers gone, you can understand it, can't you?"

And Sarah could understand it; but it didn't help. To understand all may be to forgive all, but it does nothing to alleviate boredom, or to hold off rain at bus stops, or to render enjoyable an hour of unremitting reproaches and accusations.

At first, Sarah had tried to brighten the old woman's darkening and bitter days by telling her bits of family news—amusing little

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anecdotes about the children, and so forth. But Mrs. Kinglake's resistance to having her days brightened was absolute. She hated hearing about other people, grandchildren or not, and she also hated being told anything she didn't already know. Really, it was all very difficult.

Still, duty is duty, and all that winter Sarah had slogged back and forth on Wednesdays, organizing this or that neighbor to babysit with Tamsin and Lucy. Tedious though it was, it did seem vaguely worthwhile, if only because it helped to allay Graham's sense of guilt when—as not infrequently happened—he missed one of his own Sunday visits to his mother.

But as the months passed, even this vestige of a reason for the visits began to disappear. The old lady's memory had been deteriorating fast of late, and the time came when she simply didn't remember afterwards that Sarah had come at all.

"That wife of yours, she let me down again this week," she would complain to Graham on the following Sunday. And though Graham did his best to convince her that Sarah had indeed come, and to jog her memory about the visit, it was never any good.

"Hasn't been near me for weeks!" the old woman would sullenly insist. "Got no time for me, that's what it is! Bone selfish, that's her trouble! Now, my Junie—!"

And in the end, all Graham could do was to shrug and let the matter drop, later apologising to Sarah on his mother's behalf.

Really, there was nothing else he *could* do—Sarah could see that. But all the same, as the weeks went by and the pointless, unappreciated visits came and went, Sarah found it impossible not to begin asking herself *why*? What am I doing it for? If all I get is accusations of hardheartedness and neglect, I could get those far more easily without any trouble or effort at all.

Sarah could hardly say outright to her husband, "I'm not visiting your mother any more, there's no point." It would be too hurtful. But on the other hand, the babysitting rota was nicely established now and going smoothly. So why not, just for once—that was the way it started—why not simply take the afternoon off and give herself a break? No very heinous degree of lying was called for, either to Graham or to the babysitter, because it was long indeed since there had been any news to relate of these grimly monotonous visits. ("How did you get on?" "All right. Not much change, I'm afraid" would be the extent of the exchanges incurred, and it didn't seem too wicked just to say these things yet again.)

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At first she'd meant only to do it the once. She'd headed for the library that day simply because it was raining and she couldn't think where else to go. But peace and leisure are addictive and she found herself on the following Wednesday playing truant yet again. And then—

And then? Give a man a treat three times, they say, and you have created a need. And thus it was with Sarah. This little oasis of free time, of quiet uninterrupted reading, had become a need, and the attendant guilt feelings had, by habituation, begun to diminish.

After all, what harm am I doing? she asked herself. Not, of course, expecting an answer.

Who does, when they ask themselves this question?

"Mummy! Mummy! Guess who's here!"

Tamsin, with three-year-old Lucy stumbling bemusedly in her wake, rushed to meet Sarah at the front door.

"Guess—just guess!" And dragging her mother by the hand across the hall, she banged open the sitting-room door and, with the air of a conjurer successfully overruling the laws of Nature to produce a five of diamonds, she exhibited her prize.

"Auntie June—see? This is our Auntie June, she's flown here all the way in an airplane! All the way from New Zealand! In an airplane!"

For a moment Sarah would not have recognized in this svelte and stylish figure, ash-blonde, elegant in black linen, the mousy, ill-kempt young woman who had been introduced to her as her new sister-in-law some twelve years ago.

"Oh, June! How lovely!" she managed to say. But before she could get any further, June's arms were around her and drifts of expensive scent were in her nostrils. Such an embrace seemed just a trifle overeffusive, seeing that they had met only once before, all those years ago.

"A lovely surprise!" she resumed. "But—my dear—why didn't you let us know? I do hope everything's—?"

But by now the children were clamoring for further attention.

"All the way from *New Zealand!*" Tamsin was reiterating. "*New Zealand*, where—"

"Where all the peoples walks upside-down!" Lucy contributed, awestruck. "Auntie June says—"

"No, she doesn't! Don't be silly!" interjected Tamsin scornfully.

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"*Of course* they don't walk upside down, how could they? It's just—just that—" Here Tamsin herself seemed momentarily at a loss. Then: "It's because the world is so *big*," she hazarded. "That's why everywhere on it comes right way up. Isn't that right, Auntie June?"

There was a note of anxiety in her voice—because how small would the world have to be for this *not* to be the case? Suppose the globe of Earth was only as big as—well, as a very big field. *Then* would the people on the bottom side of it be upside down? The confidence with which Tamsin turned to her brand-new aunt for reassurance on this tricky question was really quite touching. And after only one afternoon's acquaintance, too. June must certainly have a way with children.

"Quite right, sweetie," June was beginning—but now Lucy, desperate to prevent the brand-new aunt's attention slipping beyond her grasp into something obviously incomprehensible, interrupted.

"Tell us anuvver story, Auntie June!"

"The one about the bad, bad Hijack man," ordered Tamsin, leaning confidingly against the tailored black linen, entranced by the clack and tinkle of the silver earrings that dangled so fascinatingly above her head.

"No, no!" Lucy was desperate to compete. "Not the hijack man, I want the one about the camel who felt cold and they knitted him a hump-cozy."

"Silly! You couldn't knit a hump-cozy, could you, Auntie June? You'd have to crochet it, because it's a round-and-round thing."

Clearly, Auntie June was being a big success—and when later in the evening Graham arrived home, the welcome she received from him was scarcely less enthusiastic. Brother and sister hugged each other, and soon a long-hoarded bottle of champagne was being uncorked in honor of the occasion.

"To the success of whatever the hell you're up to, Junie!" Graham toasted his sister, and then: "Incidentally, what *are* you up to? What's brought you here all of a sudden, after all these years? An unprovoked but uncontrollable yearning for your long-lost brother?"

"Fancy yourself, don't you!" June laughed. "Just like old times!" Then, twirling her glass between her fingers and staring down at the glittering curve of the liquid: "Actually, it was Mother, really. Sort of. I mean, your last letter—sorry I didn't answer it, but you know what I am—from your last letter it sounded, well, you know,

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as if she— I got the feeling that if I didn't come now, right away, I might never—it might be too late."

Graham nodded sadly. "Yes," he said, "I'm afraid you're probably right. The way she's been of late—" He turned to Sarah. "How did you find her, Sal, this afternoon? Any better at all?"

A tiny gasp from June almost threw Sarah off balance. It was bad enough answering this sort of question, anyway. With a third party listening it was going to be worse still. Carefully, Sarah tried to choose her words so as not to be actually lying. "I'm afraid she doesn't improve at all," she said. "I don't think we can expect it now. So far as I can judge, she was pretty much the same today as she was last Wednesday."

"How do you mean, 'pretty much the same?' " June's voice, sharp with anxiety, startled Sarah out of her carefully rehearsed composure. She was used to answering only one question on these Wednesday evenings, to telling, at most, only one lie.

"Do you mean you *talked* to her?" June persisted, with irritating intensity of concern. Sarah could see that she was going to be dragged into a web of detailed lying such as she had managed skillfully to avoid all these weeks.

"Well, yes—I always do, naturally, when I go. I do my best. I tell her things about the children—Tamsin's dancing class, Lucy's play group. Though I never know if she's listening, if she takes any of it in."

Graham was listening placidly enough to this familiar recital. But June was staring, open-mouthed, as if listening to a voice from the grave. Was the news of her mother's condition a shock to her, then? Had she not expected the situation to be much like this?

"Of course," Sarah amended, trying to soothe her sister-in-law, "she's not *always* as bad as I've made it sound. There are moments when she—"

And just then, mercifully, before she sank any deeper into this morass of deceit, the phone went, and Graham hurried out to the hall to answer it.

From inside the room, they couldn't hear what he was saying, but from the deepening gravity of his tone, and from the long, listening pauses in between, both women knew exactly what the news would be long before he came slowly back into the room.

Yes, Mother had died. Yes, very suddenly. This morning, they'd said, but of course that must be a mistake, because Sarah had visited her this afternoon. "I told them you'd found her pretty much as

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usual," Graham said, turning to his wife. "They were surprised. Apparently the doctor said she'd been dead for some hours when he came—but of course they can't always be certain, it must vary a lot. They want to talk to you, Sal, about exactly how you found her this afternoon—whether you noticed anything different from usual in her behavior, that sort of thing. They're going to send someone around right now. That's okay, isn't it? You don't feel too—you know, the shock?"

The appallingness of the shock was something he must never know. "Of course it's okay," she said—and if her voice shook a little, well, why shouldn't it? Natural enough, surely, when you've just had news of a death in the family.

It was only when the "someone" they sent around turned out to be a policeman that the truth of the matter began to dawn. This was no natural and expectable death from one of the ordinary hazards of old age—heart attack, stroke, or the like. This was a murder case. And so of course Sarah's evidence, to the effect that the old lady had been alive and well (that is, no worse than usual) between two and four in the afternoon was a vital clue, an all-important guide to the direction and scope of the inquiry.

Had Sarah realized right from the start exactly what was at stake she might have retracted her false statement. But what with the policeman being so kind, and breaking the thing to her so gently, and with so many euphemisms, she had not fully grasped what had happened or the significance of what she was doing until it was too late. She had made her statement and she had signed it—it wasn't until later in the evening when the policeman had gone, accompanied by Graham to go through the formalities of identifying his mother's body, that she found herself face to face with the full consequences of what she had done.

"Sarah," cried June as soon as they were alone together, "oh, darling, darling Sal! You're a heroine! I'll never forget it to my dying day! I never *dreamed* you'd stand up for me like that—and at the risk of drawing suspicion on yourself, too! So brave! So noble! I'll never, never be able to thank you enough—oh, Sal, *darling!darling!*"

Utterly bewildered, Sarah extricated herself from the unexpected embrace and stared at her sister-in-law. "Thank me for what? What on earth have I done?"

"*Done*? Why, you've saved my life! Let me off the hook! By swearing blind that Mother was still alive this afternoon, you've put them

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off the scent! Because of course I've got an absolute alibi for this afternoon—being your babysitter, for one. So *clever* of you, Sal, to see exactly what to do—and how brave, how marvelous of you to do it!"

"*June!*" Sarah stepped back, aghast. "You mean it was *you*?"

"But you *know* it was! Why else did you tell all those lies to save me? Oh, you were wonderful, I'll never be able to repay you! Though of course when I get all that money—"

The barrage of gratitude seemed unstoppable, but gradually, under Sarah's questioning, the main outlines of the story became clear.

Death had been instantaneous, June assured her. A blow on the head from behind with a heavy vase. The poor old soul couldn't have felt a thing, and now she was out of her misery—wasn't that a blessing?

And, well, no, it hadn't been a mercy-killing, not really. June had had this letter some little while ago in which her mother said she had changed her will and was leaving everything to her, June. "And so I thought, wow, let's make sure of this before she changes her mind. So I packed in my job, sublet my flat, and popped over by the first plane I could get and conked her one.

"It was just before midday and they were all running around doing things about lunch, so I thought no one would see me. Unfortunately, I ran into two of the hold hags on my way out and I've been terrified that they might tell. They were probably both potty and won't remember anything, but you never know. I've been worried as hell all afternoon, so you can imagine how grateful—how *superlatively* grateful—I felt when I heard you telling those lies for me! It was like an answer to a prayer, you sticking to your story that the old girl was alive in the afternoon. So now it doesn't matter *who* saw me or *what* those two old hags may choose to say because nothing that happened that early is of any relevance. Oh, Sarah, isn't it marvelous? And you *did* do it for my sake, I *know* you did, whatever you may say. Well, after all, I *am* your husband's sister, aren't I, it would be quite natural for you to protect me, blood being thicker than water. Blood-in-law, I suppose I should say."

And so on. Afterward, Sarah couldn't remember exactly what she had said in reply to this terrible confession, recited as it was in such a strangely casual and offhand manner. She remembered the night, though—the long, silent hours, with Graham sleeping unaware beside her while her thoughts tilted this way and that, ever and again

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slopping over the edge of consciousness, like water carried no matter how carefully in a shallow tray.

"Of *course* I must go to the police and admit that I lied" slopped over on the one side, to be followed almost at once by a massive shifting of weight to the other, where a whole medley of rival thoughts slopped over. What about Graham? What about the children? What about family loyalty? Besides, will the police even believe me? By changing my story, I shall have become a lying witness in a murder case and automatically under suspicion myself.

It could ruin Graham's career. It could darken the children's lives for years to come. A mother—or even an aunt—on trial for murder, and then in prison for probably the whole of their childhood and schooldays!

Besides, Sarah told herself as dawn began to brighten outside the window, besides, it's *done* now. The old lady is dead. She can't be brought back to life—to her miserable life—even if anyone were cruel enough to wish to do such a thing.

"Auntie June! Auntie June! It's *my* turn now!"

"Look, Auntie June, look at me! I'm being a flapping bird! Look! Look!"

Sarah must have slept in the end, because here she was being startled awake by the joyous squeals from across the landing. Tasmin and Lucy had evidently scuttled across into their enchanting new aunt's bedroom, all agog with the joys of early morning, and enticed her into a glorious game of romps. Soon the trio appeared at the door of the parents' room, the little girls, flushed with excitement, clutching one on each side the skirts of the scarlet-and-gold housecoat that swung in exotic splendor from Auntie June's shoulders.

"Mummy, Mummy, get up! Auntie June says that after breakfast she'll take us to see—"

"Mummy, look what Auntie June's gived me! A *real* feather from a *real* peacock! Isn't it, Auntie June?"

And so it went on. Auntie June was marvelous with the children —and, incidentally, a marvelous help to Sarah, taking them off her hands at this busy time—busy, of course, with arrangements for the funeral (much delayed by the necessity for an inquest) and with the complex and exhausting business of sorting out the old lady's belongings, getting them removed from the Home, and all the rest of the wearisome chores incident on a death. So busy was she, indeed,

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that Sarah found herself at times almost losing sight of the nagging burden on her conscience, still not wholly resolved.

June was such a delightful person, that was the problem; and the children adored her so. Graham, too, delighted in his sister's company, after their long separation. How could Sarah bring herself to destroy, forever, all these life-enhancing relationships? Knowingly, deliberately to put in their place a grim and inescapable tragedy, to hang as a black cloud over the whole family, forever?

On the other hand, June was a murderess, self-confessed.

But, of course, she wasn't *only* a murderess, any more than a postman is only a postman. He is also a husband, a darts-player, a breeder of canaries—hundreds of things. Similarly, June was not *only* a murderess, she was also a loving aunt, an amusing companion, a clever cook, an affectionate sister, a marvelous story-teller—generous to a fault, and with such a gift for happiness.

Irresistible qualities: and with every passing day of her enlivening presence, the fact of the murder seemed to become more and more remote, fading ever further into the past.

Except that, now and again, something would happen disconcertingly to recall it. A further interview with the police, perhaps, who of course were still painstakingly pursuing the false trail on which Sarah had launched them. And then, of course, there were June's reiterated and disconcerting expressions of gratitude towards Sarah, which seemed unstoppable and which made Sarah squirm with discomfort. There had been a bad moment, too, when June had remarked on her own foresight in wearing a really good black suit for the plane journey—"Because of course I knew I was coming for a funeral!" she'd laughed.

It was this sort of levity, almost as much as the murder itself, which upset Sarah at times, and filled her with distaste and unease. At other times, though, she would find herself wondering if it was not this very lack of guilt feelings, this very absence of conscience, which was the real secret of June's charm, especially for the children. Here was an adult traveling light as a bird through life, unencumbered by any of the burdens which weigh the normal adult down.

The days turned into weeks, the funeral was long over, and the whole affair had faded from the papers before the next thing happened.

It was nearly two months after the event, and June had become an established member of the household, when Sarah, looking

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through the local paper, came upon the item which, deep in her heart, she had been dreading from the very beginning. They had caught the Sunset Home murderer, it was claimed—a teenage layabout with a couple of minor burglaries to his name had been seen loitering around the Home soon after four o'clock on the fatal day. Two women had already come forward to identify him, and on top of this his fingerprints had been found on and around one of the windowsills by which he could have gained entrance. It appeared to be an open-and-shut case.

Sarah was aware of a shadow falling over the print as she sat, numbed with horror. The familiar expensive scent wafted across her consciousness. Over her shoulder, June was leaning down reading the report.

"But how marvelous!" she cried joyously. "Now we're *really* in the clear! Oh, Sarah, darling, isn't it *wonderful!*" and it was as her sister-in-law's arms came round her in delighted congratulation that Sarah at last came to her decision.

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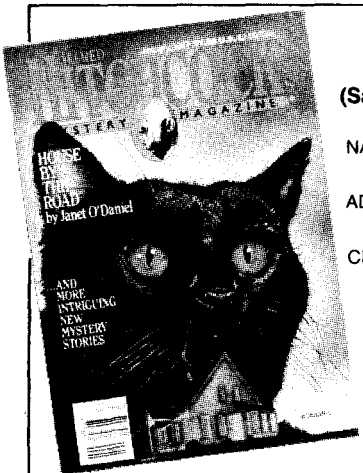

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a distinguished reprint by

ROBERT HENDERSON

"The Intruder" first appeared in the March 1965 issue of The Saturday Evening Post. *As readable now as then, its message is stronger now than ever. The changing world holds very personal implications for each and every one of us, no matter how sheltered we might be. In confronting it, as we must, we inevitably and painfully confront ourselves.*

The stories of Robert Henderson, who is on the editorial staff of The New Yorker, *have been published in a wide variety of publications, including* The New Yorker, The Saturday Evening Post, Esquire, *and now, we are happy to claim,* Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . .

THE INTRUDER

by ROBERT HENDERSON

My name is Neil Wainwright, and I am a teacher. Professor of history. Sixteenth Century. Married. Thirty-four years married. Wife's name: Elizabeth. One married daughter: Ann. I haven't seen Ann in nearly ten months. It seems too long. I live in a place I've loved for seventeen years, in a block off lower Fifth Avenue that has trees, and grace, and quiet people. This apartment is a rambling duplex, and I am writing not in my own workroom but in a small room upstairs.

Tonight Elizabeth is at a concert with friends and I am alone, searching for something that I have not yet been able to define. Something—well, faceless. I've said "panic" to myself all week, but that is just a dodge. I know it. What lies *back* of panic is the question.

I keep writing, running along, and I am reluctantly aware that

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behind me is the window through which someone entered this room one warm night last April. Is that what I am looking for? Perhaps. Yes, that night must be the starting place. And was it because of that intrusion, though it wasn't much in itself, that I came to the room tonight? I think so.

It really is rather a ridiculous little room. It makes no sense, has no coherence, though it can start memories up like rabbits. Ann is in it, so to speak. It was her room for three years before she went to college, and she left a few tokens. High-school texts; a clay model she made of her poodle which is quite good. She was only thirteen. The proportions are rough, maybe, but the thing is alive.

On the daybed is one of Elizabeth's handbags. She used to leave a row of them there—she often dresses in this room—but since that night in April she generally keeps them out of sight. The burglar went through them, and afterward they seemed unclean to her. She brushed and rubbed them half the next afternoon. Then there are filing cases and stacks of big envelopes, all full of work I finished long ago. Cards I made out in Gloucestershire and other places. On the table in front of me is a round, smooth, honey-colored stone. I picked it up in a meadow in Greece. It's not a fragment of anything that I know of, though it could be. I just believed that it must have been there when the temples were. With some things you don't have to care too much about verification. They connect. Besides, the Greeks aren't my field, and I can imagine them to suit myself.

So, begin with the burglar—or at least with the burglary, for I never saw him. Elizabeth saw a shape. Our bedroom door is next to the door of this room. The night was warm. We had put on the air-conditioner, which, of course, made a sound in the room. Opposite the bedroom door is another door giving on an outer stairway. Elizabeth heard someone moving and groping in the little hall between. She thought I had got up and was ill or confused, and she called to me, and I woke up and answered from the bed beside hers. The stair door opened, and a man slipped out, and it closed behind him. All I saw, half awake, was a burst of light and the return of the dark; and then Elizabeth screamed.

I jumped for the door—a hero—but listened before I opened it. There was no sound, and no one was outside. No one was on the staircase. I shut and locked the door and put on the hall light. Elizabeth was standing in the middle of the bedroom. She is almost as tall as I am, but she seemed quite small. I could see her shaking.

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So was I. We just looked at each other, and then, at the same moment, hurried into Ann's room—this room.

The window was open, though not very wide. He must have been agile; he had come in over a row of potted plants on the sill. The handbags on the bed had been thrown about. There had been money in only one of them—a few dollars. Nothing else seemed to be gone. We went downstairs and I called the police, who came quickly. They looked around, asked questions, and left, and we waited there a while without saying that what we were waiting for was dawn. When it came, we went upstairs and, before going back to bed, looked into the room again. I closed the window, feeling an odd distaste at touching it. Elizabeth found a few nickels and dimes on the bed and table, and then a little red coin-purse lying in a corner of the hall. I picked up a large number of burnt matches from the rug. He had been lighting matches—for how long?—a dozen feet away from us while we slept.

Now it suddenly seems strange that that was all there was to it. It happened half a year ago and this room is still always *that* room. Worse things—terrible things—have happened to peaceful people. A man happens to jostle another man and is followed and stabbed to death with a broken bottle. A woman rings for her elevator and finds her husband in it, shot through the heart. But this place is not the street, or some alien corner of town. It is where Elizabeth and I live—where we and Ann have lived, full of certainty—and it was entered by stealth, invaded in darkness by someone silent and faceless.

Certainty. I suppose that may be the word I am reaching for at the moment. How do you write down what the place you live in is to you? Seventeen years' worth of the growth of certainties. That's enough to lay a soft luster over the rooms and the furniture and us. It didn't always exist, either; there have been changes and storms—even here, at first. But this apartment lies at the physical heart of a kind of enclave, a haven. The Avenues at each end are busy, but our block is apart and knows it. When you turn into the block, you feel as if you had entered a private place, come through a gate. It has legends of ghosts in old townhouses, and other minor traditions. It even has a tame beggar—a tall, watery, middle-aged man with a foolish smile, who turns up each spring and cruises the block once or twice a day during the good weather. He pets the dogs and picks up a few coins. People tolerate him. He isn't around *too* much, and he's part of the scene.

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No one seems to move away. Some of the neighbors get up a caroling session at Christmas. We've never joined in, but it is extremely pleasant to hear. So, yes, it is a scene where certainties develop. For instance, the certainty of things in balance—weatherproof, watertight. The certainty of safety.

Elizabeth and I didn't sleep any more that morning, and the rest of the day was out of kilter, though we pretended it wasn't. We would catch ourselves speaking low and listening to nothing. We weren't afraid. There was nothing to be afraid of. But I know I felt displaced, or somehow guilty of defilement, and I resented it. I gave two lectures. I wanted to cancel the second and get back home, but what for? To startle Elizabeth? I had bolts put on the doors, which did seem sensible. I fitted a two-by-four into the upper frame of that window—I told myself I did it to calm Elizabeth—and ordered a special window lock. And then, going through the room while she was cleaning handbags, I saw a smudge of black at the edge of the rug. It was sticky. We hadn't been talking much about the burglar, so I didn't point it out, but I knew that the roof next door was newly tarred and I saw smears of black on our gutter. Later, I found a grimy empty match packet under this table. He was hard to exorcise. We had been asked out to dinner that night. When we got home and were preparing for bed, I saw Elizabeth absently look back of several doors. As I came out of the bathroom, she was closing the one to the staircase. "There's some of that tar on the landing," she said offhandedly, and we went to bed without turning on the air-conditioner, though the night was warm again.

The window lock came in less than a week and I put it on myself. It seemed more than just a device to secure a window—more like a promise that the nights and days would be as they always had been. The window is a dormer, with triangles of wall on either side. I installed the lock to the left of the frame and tightened it, and as I turned away I saw a clear handprint high on the right-hand wall. He was not gone yet. I scrubbed it off at once and never told Elizabeth it had been there.

Perhaps, because of later events, I am dwelling too much on how upset we were—perhaps I am even magnifying it, but I think not. At any rate, that is what happened. We tried to forget the intruder, but for a long time untethered pronouns would keep slipping into the talk—just "he" or "him" or "his." "He must be small," Elizabeth would say out of the blue; or, "I wish I could know who he is, or *what* he is." She seemed to need to give him a face and a definition. It

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bothered her that he might be someone she had passed on the street, and she began to scrutinize all grocers' boys and repairmen.

Between then and now, a secretary has been shot down at her desk in a college office, no one knows why—no one but the person who shot her. A quiet, elderly woman has been strangled for two dollars and thirty cents in a great hive of a building not far from here. A middle-aged teacher has been raped and killed in her own hallway. These are the incidents that happen to come to mind at the moment; there have been a hundred others, and in a way our burglar has been guilty of them all.

I used to walk everywhere on this island, sometimes with Elizabeth, sometimes alone, often at night. We would stay up prowling small bars or penny arcades, or the Washington Market. Once we waited all night to go out on the Brooklyn Bridge at dawn. "The whole thing belongs to you, doesn't it?" Elizabeth said as we stood looking back at the skyline. I had just been given some sort of promotion, and that was why she said it. I like to recall how her face looked.

I love to be in strange sections of Manhattan, to turn a corner and come unexpectedly on trees, or glimpse a ship. I love the way darkness comes into the streets, while the sun still burns on the windows of a building that has itself turned dusty red. And such things as I am putting down here used to add up to a curious contentment. Lively but casual. Free. One recent winter, there was such a snow that no cars were allowed on the streets, and people poured outdoors and wandered in them. Neighbors became friends. The goodness of the city was boundless. I guess I did know better, but that was how it seemed.

Well, not now. For a while, Elizabeth gathered a small bouquet of suspects. I don't think she really believed in them herself, but she needed them. She remembered a skinny painter who had once worked in our building. She tried to believe that the block beggar was a burglar's lookout, though even she wouldn't argue that he could have made the climb to this window. Later she recalled that when the man who picked up our laundry had been ill, a lithe little Puerto Rican had taken his place.

And as Elizabeth narrowed the field, I widened it. Before long, I had stopped thinking about one man. "He" had become "they," and I was conscious of all the stealthy and violent men. Facelessness became a multiplicity of faces. And now I think I am coming to one

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of the things I was afraid I would find out: all of the faces, or most of them, were dark, Black, or at least swarthy. I think I pretended they weren't. I tried to blur the picture or dismiss it. I had never yet confronted prejudice in myself—it was something I was not supposed to have. But the faces were dark. After a while, some of the faces changed. Pale ones crept in. Addicts. Sick boys. Crazy ones. Drifters from the Bowery, or from the South or West. "They" come from everywhere; they *are* everywhere, and they are of all complexions. But most of the faces were dark for quite a while. Eventually they blurred, and violence grew anonymous again. A climate. A component of the air. Every so often you read of a stone thrown through a window of a commuter train; a commuter has an eye put out on his way home. Done by the climate. A young girl, going home at night from a graduation party, is picked off by a sniper from some anonymous roof.

But even home is not always safe. One is aware of that in spite of new locks and bars. Elizabeth is not safe. I sometimes wonder what I would have done if I had wakened and found the man there in the bedroom with us. I don't know. I believe I would have tackled him somehow, but only out of confusion or shock, or because it would seem incumbent on me in Elizabeth's presence. That is the only way I do anything brave—under pressure or grimly. Something is expected of me, or expected by myself. Mostly I try to evade the need—and I am evading now. I am stalling. I do not want to face the fears I have for Elizabeth. Too explicit pictures come to the edge of vision sometimes and I deny them, refuse them entry.

One day when Ann was four, she was playing outside with a part-time maid who left her for a short while. I went out, just by chance, and saw a squat, unshaven man with her. He scuttled away. I thought she had never looked so tiny. She said he was nice—he had promised to buy her candy and take her to a park, and I can feel again now the sensation in my belly. They would have been gone around the corner in a minute and I have never let myself imagine beyond that.

Well, I am not going to imagine what harm could come to Elizabeth. I want no harm at all to come to her, and there must be other ways of thinking this through. For instance, start with the old stone, there, that came from Greece. There is more clinging to it than a doubtful antiquity. When I brought it home it was also a kind of token, a private promise that wherever I went afterward Elizabeth

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would go, too. It has been a paperweight in here for a dozen years, but that is how it got here. I've kept the promise. It has been easy.

That Greek meadow is a shallow green cup that tilts to the edge of a high cliff beside the Aegean Sea. I could see islands, I remember. I went there in search of presences. I was also there because I had ruined Elizabeth's plans for a summer on Cape Cod by banging off to do research in Naples, and then going on to Greece just to show her that I could. Independence. Rubbing it in. We quarreled too much in those days. I was always snatching at traveling grants and fellowships to get away. I liked to put on a bit of swagger, for one thing, and I could never enjoy it around home. I liked to wear jaunty old soft-brimmed hats and carry a blackthorn cane and look appraisingly at people. I don't suppose they took much notice but I thought they did.

Elizabeth and I were very far apart by that summer. We scarcely wrote, and I was miserable from June until late August. But I hung around there in that meadow all my last afternoon in Greece, turning this stone in my hand and feeling no presence except hers. I grew peculiarly happy and somehow I made peace with myself and, in my mind, with her. I don't know how I managed it—effect of the pale-gold light, the sea; maybe, after all, the other presences. Or else I felt that I deserved a reward for having been so miserable. Now that I was going home, I calculated that I didn't even need to be forgiven. And I forgave Elizabeth for her part in all our wars. I meant it, and with love.

Yes, but there was so little to forgive. Even tonight, when there is nothing whatever left of those old quarrels, they seem immeasurably sad and wasteful. She would plunge into some needless piece of housework afterward. At midnight, her hair flying, she would passionately wax the kitchen floor. (Her hair is very fine and light, and it has always flown a little.) I thought then that she was showing me how put-upon she was, but now I know she was also setting her house in order against the time when order would come back to it. She has always longed for order.

She has found it. We have it. That was a turning-point summer. The battles stopped. They never were the large part of our life, only the worst part. We've traveled; the fellowships still come, and the college is generous with time. But getting back here to Manhattan, and to this smaller island of our own within it, has always been at least as good as going away. Certainty and order. I haven't been to Greece again, but someday we will go there. We will try to find some

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presences. I think Elizabeth will feel at home with them, and they with her. *Nothing* must happen to her.

So, then—what does lie back of panic? What is the deep source? That is what I've told myself I was looking for, chiefly, and all these matters of fear and love may add up to part of the answer, but not to all of it. Now I had better set down quickly what happened that night last week.

I went to an evening meeting uptown. I sometimes carry my blackthorn cane at night, and I had it with me. Coming home, I wasn't able to get a cab, so I took the subway. I got off at Fourteenth Street, walked down Sixth Avenue, and turned into our block, and a man stepped out of the shadows around a tree directly in front of me and stood blocking my path. I was badly startled and I swung and pushed at him with the cane in an awkward, womanish way but he didn't speak, just loomed there. And then—and I assume this was panic—I hit him with the heavy end of it, and he went down. It happened fast. I will have to try to remember at what point I recognized him. This is crucial. It was our foolish beggar. For a minute or so I was sure that I had killed him. I felt as if I might be drowning.

It was panic and it wasn't. That day some boys with knives had run loose on a subway platform, cutting two men and a girl selected at random. Nothing really untoward had happened on my own train, but a man—yes, a Negro, and yes, I do know now that this must have mattered to me at least a little—had been across the car, talking to himself and swaying and lurching and watching me, but he had stayed there. And the beggar is white.

I didn't want to touch him, though I thought I must. If Elizabeth had been there, of course I would have. Everything would have been different. He moved and grunted and sat up. He was facing away from me, and I walked backward to the corner, where there is a police callbox. The man got up. He went east slowly without looking around, staggering a good deal. I called the police and reported an injured derelict wandering in this block. By then, he was gone in the darkness, but a police car came and drove slowly down the block, and stopped near Fifth Avenue. I had waited just around the corner on Sixth, and now I followed at a distance. The car stood a while. I suppose they picked him up. They left, and when I walked down there the block was empty.

There it is. A ludicrous affair with an unspeakably shabby ending. A Nineteenth Century caning in the streets. A Twentieth Century

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panic. But something besides panic swung the cane, for before I hit him hard I recognized him. And I hit him more than once. I don't say that I could have stopped my arm. But—I have to say—I *wanted* to hit him.

No—not *him*, I suppose. He is harmless. I never for a moment thought otherwise. He was only going to try to wheedle a small donation. He stands and simpers at you before he comes to the point. I knew him, but at the same time, he was—well, faceless. Irrelevant in himself, but suddenly one of *them*. I may have been defending myself, my ordered life, from them, but I know that just for a few seconds there, I joined them. I can't say what's fear and what's hate—they are all but synonymous. But I know you can get a lot said with a few swings of a blackthorn cane, and then you have to figure out what it was.

I will find some anonymous way to make amends to him. I would like to think I could face him, but this is an evening for at least approximate truth. I can find him. He has not been back, but I saw him from a taxi yesterday, in a seedy block of rooming houses and small stores, shambling along as usual, smiling his silly smile. He seemed all right. But why did I remain anonymous *then*? Cowardice? No. No, no—not really. I just didn't want to get mixed up in a mess. Well, I have *never* wanted to be mixed up with anyone but Elizabeth and Ann and a few friends, or anything but my work and selected pleasures. But for a long time now, Elizabeth and I have been caught up inescapably in the climate, the violent air. The intruder came, and in a sense he stayed. In this room. In our lives. In me.

Yes. There it is, at last. In me. And in me all along. Sleeping, but there. Fear that had no call to stir out of doors, becoming hate, in all the good years. The faces were dark because of something in me. Something embedded. I have been thinking of that stealthy little man as an invader, but perhaps he is more of a resident, after all. Sometimes, when Elizabeth lies awake, I can guess that she is listening, more than half expecting him to come back. But now I know that he has been here all the while. We may never really exorcise him, but we must try.

"Q"

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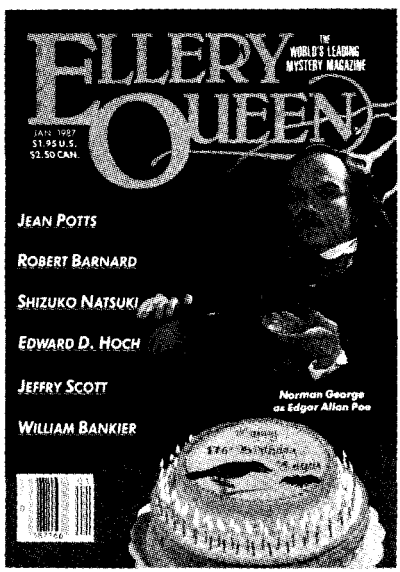

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a *NEW* Maynard Bullock story by

JAMES POWELL

Composing these seventeen-syllable verses in the Japanese style was Mr. Tugawa's hobby. When he had explained this to Bullock the first time and called them "haiku," Bullock had innocently replied, "God bless you." So this had become a standing joke between them.

Our new favorite Maynard Bullock story, his antagonist this time a Japanese-Canadian as sweet and lovable as the good Mountie himself. And let's face it, that's saying a lot . . .

THE BRIM WHISTLE

by JAMES POWELL

When the Mountie's famous scarlet-tunicked uniform was introduced at the turn of the century, it became an instant hit with the Force. Stories say you had to stand in line to use the barrack's full-length mirror as each man marched up to salute himself in the glass and then looked back over his shoulder to watch himself march away. And nowhere was the outfit more popular than in the headgear department. The old pill-box hats with the chin strap had obliged many a Mountie to prove his manhood with his fists. No one had been unhappy to see them go.

But rumor had it that the government was negotiating with the British Army for a warehouse full of Garnet Wolseley pith helmets with spikes on the crown left over from the Second Ashanti War. This, the more seasoned Mounties knew, would be the spark to ignite the tinterbox of the Northwest, as sneering and hooting Indians and halfbreeds took to the warpath. So the final choice of the manly, functional, and up-to-date stetson was met with cheers from all sides.

If the stetson had a weakness, it was the brim. The Saturday-

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night rough-and-tumble to close up the beer parlors at 11:30 so the prospectors and lumberjacks would be off the streets before the Sabbath left many a Mountie soaking his knuckles in toughening brine back at the post while he glumly contemplated a wrecked brim. In the rougher jurisdictions, some men even fell into the hands of unscrupulous money-lending hat blockers and morale on the Force sagged.

Then one day, two Mounties in shabby mufti were standing in the Regina Salvation Army soup line quietly commiserating with each other on the brim-repair problem. They didn't notice the hump-backed derelict with a club foot and a hideous scar standing behind them. They didn't notice him leave the line and slip out the door. The man limped quickly to the nearby railway yard and a siding where a humble freight car stood alone. In answer to the derelict's complicated knock, a door opened and the man quickly disappeared into the disguised splendor of the vice-regal railway car.

Taking the brandy from the tray held out to him by his Punjabi valet, the Duke of Connaught—for indeed it was Canada's gallant Governor General, who liked to rove incognito to learn if his people thought themselves well governed—hurried to the telegraphic apparatus, shedding his fake afflictions on the way. The stuttering replies to his several short messages told him he'd overheard the truth. Taking a sheet of the gilt-edged paper which one must always use when approaching one's sovereign directly, the Duke of Connaught dipped his pen nib in the inkwell and began, "Dear Georgie . . ."

So Brim Day was born, the day when a share of the earnings from the Royal tin mines in Cornwall are distributed among the RCMP for hat maintenance. The Mounties gather in scarlet tunics and breeks. Behind a table at one end of the room sits the district superintendent. As the inspector standing beside the table reads his name from the roster, each man marches forward, salutes, and stands at attention. With a nod or a kind word, the superintendent then hands the man a drawstring bag plump with silver dollars. The man salutes again, executes a smart about-face, and returns to his place.

Invariably the room reeked of mothballs. Acting Sergeant Maynard Bullock had often pondered the irony of that pungent smell. Most on the Force these days probably had their brim money from the word go. Why not? At best they took their stetsons out of the

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hatbox once or twice a year. The few who could call the scarlet tunic and stetson everyday wear were those "on the cutting edge of Mountie public relations," as Bullock liked to describe his job of guarding the flowerbeds on Parliament Hill. And in that hard, cold world, a man could run through brims at an unbelievable clip, like getting into those little foreign cars or bending over too quickly to put coins in the candy machine. Or what about those blasted phone-booth doors? By godfrey, could they ever chew up a stetson brim and spit it out!

So it was not too strange that Bullock's dream was to come up with a stetson brim that could really take the heat and to hear himself referred to as "Bullock, the noted Mountie inventor." He'd set up a workbench in a mousy corner of the cellar for when this fit was upon him. Two old stetsons hung there on the wall. The one with the telephone book stuck to it had been used to test "Jiffybrim," his spray-lacquer brainstorm you applied to a break and then weighted down the brim with something heavy. The other wildly fluted one was the unsatisfactory prototype of a hat with a replaceable brim attached by a circle of metal snaps—one that could also be rotated a snap every month to avoid salute rut, the small depression made by the middle finger of the saluting hand.

But if his mind teemed with ideas, whenever Bullock had a couple of damaged stetsons he would still put them in a paper bag and pay a visit to Chez Tugawa, the little hat-cleaning shop in his neck of Ottawa. Old Egidio Tugawa—the Tugawas were Catholic, and as far back as Japan it had been the family tradition to name male children after papal nuncios—was a short, powerful, nutmeg-colored man in his sixties with ear-patches of white hair. His reputation as a master repairer of stetson brims had brought him Mountie business from all over the country. And he was the only person Bullock knew who had a twinkle in his eye.

Tugawa always greeted Bullock with that twinkle and ushered him into his backroom workshop where the electric teakettle simmered atop the radiator. Tugawa had been born and raised in Prince Rupert, British Columbia, where his family had a small fishing fleet. Bullock had never asked what had brought the man to Ottawa because he feared he'd been among those Japanese-Canadians evacuated and relocated inland by the Force during the first days of the Second World War.

While the old man finished the homburg or fedora he was working on, Bullock sat at the small desk under the window and asked about

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Tugawa's grandchildren, the boy who was a doctor in Toronto, the girl who taught jurisprudence at Dalhousie, the other one married and living in California. Then Tugawa asked after Bullock's wife, for good old Mavis sometimes came by to pick up Bullock's stetsons and Tugawa held her in great awe. At last the kettle was at the boil.

On this particular December night as the tea steeped, Bullock outlined his latest hat idea, an all-aluminum stetson. The whole thing would be flocked brown. The brim, set in a track, would come off with a short backward twist, providing the wearer with a handy quoitlike weapon against crime. ("When the hophead went for his gun, I bullocked it right out of his hand from across the room.")

Tugawa sipped his tea. "A pity we don't have some eyebrow hairs from the bushy-tailed brighteye."

Bullock stopped in mid-stir. "The bushy-tailed what?"

"Among my father's stories when I was a child," said Tugawa, "was one about these legendary dwarf gazelles of Mount Fujiyama which hopped the mountain crags escaping the most skillful hunter. You see, its eyebrow hairs jutted out so taut and straight that they forced the creature's eyes wide open and constantly on the alert. In fact, they were so taut that during the Second World War the Imperial Japanese Navy used them for cross-hairs in the kamikaze bombsights, none of which have come down to us." Tugawa's eyes twinkled at Bullock from over his teacup. "Now suppose we doctored the underside of your stetson brims with bushy-tailed brighteye hairs. Why, then you'd have a stetson that could take anything this world could dish out and bounce right back for more."

By godfrey! thought Bullock. But then his smile faded. "Hey, how does the little tyke sleep?"

"When the twilight is fading fast, it settles into some leafy nook or cranny and waits, wide-eyed," said Tugawa. "Soon the nightingale stirs into song. And something in that first note makes the gazelle's eyebrows sag and then drop down like a curtain over the eyes. And so the little creature sleeps soundly until the first note of cockcrow makes the eyebrows spring taut again. My father used to tell me this story at bedtime.

"According to him, one of our ancestors, a poor mountaineer wise in the ways of the gazelle, supported his little family by hunting bushy-tailed brighteyes thanks to a yea-long bamboo whistle he made that imitated that magical nightingale note. Then my father would pull out what he swore was the very same whistle, and we

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would pretend I was the little gazelle and when he blew the whistle I was to fall asleep and wake up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed."

Tugawa smiled and reached for Bullock's paperbag. He carefully took out the first stetson and spun it on the spindle of his index finger, saying,

"Brim-fed phone booth, please
Graze elsewhere. Let Bullock's hat
Lie fallow a year."

Then Tugawa cocked an expectant eye. Composing these seventeen-syllable verses in the Japanese style was the old man's hobby. When he had explained this to Bullock the first time and called them "haiku," Bullock had innocently replied, "God bless you." So this had become a standing joke between them.

But today no "God bless you" came. Instead, a frowning Bullock said, "But couldn't a whistle like that make doctored stetson brims—" Bullock caught himself. By godfrey, he'd almost put into Mr. Tugawa's head the perfect way to avenge himself and the other Japanese-Canadians for the grave injustice done to them by Canada and the RCMP so many years ago.

Almost? He looked at Tugawa, who twinkled inscrutably. Blast! thought Bullock.

Bullock was wearing an ice-cream vendor's outfit and working an aisle of the crowded north visitors gallery of the House of Commons. At least it looked like the House. But the M.P.'s benches had been removed and at the south end where the Speaker's Chair should have been sat Queen Elizabeth the Second and Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Princess Di, and the entire Royal Family, each on his or her own throne. Peculiar, thought Bullock.

Just then a tremendous clatter outside in the marble hallway announced a double column of Mounties riding in on horseback and carrying lances decorated with bright pennants. From somewhere in the chamber the Mountie band struck up "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" and man and horse began the integrated maneuvers that have charmed millions. By godfrey, a Command Performance of the Musical Ride! That explained everything. Bullock was there in disguise to protect the Royal Family! He beamed with pride as the audience applauded each equestrian turn—the Dome, the Star, the Maze (with the band playing "Show Me the Way To Go Home"), and all the rest.

Now the horses were cantering back to the north end for the time-

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honored finale where the Mounties lowered their lances and, riding knee to knee, charged the expensive seats. Bullock turned around so he could enjoy the expressions of those who didn't know that the horsemen would swerve aside at the last instant. That was when he saw Tugawa and his damnable whistle in the top row! Bullock started up the steps three at a time, but hands grabbed him from every side—customers desperate for his eskimo pies. Behind him came the snap of the pennants as the lances were lowered. Frantic, Bullock tried to sell his way through the crowd, scattering his wares left and right and stuffing the money in his pockets. It was the blasted making change that slowed him down.

When Bullock heard the shout the charging Mounties made, he tried to bull his way up the stairs. Tugawa's smile told him he would be too late. The whistle's terrible note made Bullock turn. He saw the stetson brims fall limply over the charging riders' eyes. The blinded Mounties failed to turn aside. Instead their lances found royal breasts and their confused horses trampled heirs to the throne underfoot. Then out of the carnage and onto the chamber floor rolled the Queen Regnant's crown.

Bullock woke with a start, into a silence so deep he thought a cry must have preceded it. But good old Mavis was sleeping soundly at his side. Bullock crossed his arms and stared up at the ceiling. Me and my big mouth have given Mr. Tugawa the perfect way to blind Canada's first line of defense should he choose to take it. Bullock thought long and hard about getting himself out of this little pickle. One thing was for sure: he wasn't going to panic. Mr. Tugawa might just be as loyal a Canadian as the next man. But even with a worst-case scenario, time was on Bullock's side.

First, it would take a good three weeks to get a supply of those gazelle eyebrows from Japan. Second, the Force would be wearing fur hats until the ice broke up in Commissioner McNaughton's bird-bath, which traditionally signaled the switch to summer kit and stetson.

That evening after supper, Bullock decided to pay Tugawa another visit. Outside, the night was filled with what the Yukon called a keyhole blizzard because inside every front door the relentlessly horizontal wind left a curiously twisted cone of snow—no two alike because no two keyholes were the same. In the Thirties, RCMP Inspector Dunstan Brass, one of Bullock's early heroes, had used

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this phenomenon to solve the famous Case of the Swapped Quonset Huts.

Bullock walked with the wind at his back as the muffled traffic flowed slowly by him on the street. Shop windows were rectangles of snowstorm, like hellish television screens in the darkness. Yes, a real Canadian loves this kind of weather. Oh, sure, he'll complain about it along with you just to be polite. But after a while you can tell his heart isn't in the bellyaching. Still, it wasn't a good loyalty test for British Columbians, whose winters were milder. With them you had to be sly.

Bullock told Tugawa he'd been walking in the neighborhood pondering an important case and had dropped in to chew the rag over a cup of tea. The old man fell for it. Even though he was very busy—there were Mountie stetsons everywhere, as if some of the boys were getting the jump on spring—Tugawa broke off for tea. When the moment was right, Bullock narrowed his eyes a shade and said, "Quite a wind out there. The elements can really build up a head of steam roaring across our frozen wasteland. Did you ever muse on how things like that can shape a people's character, Mr. Tugawa? Our vast distances have shaped us. We're vast, too."

"And distant?" wondered Tugawa. "And wasteful?"

"Yeah?" answered Bullock, more hotly than he intended. "Yeah? Well, at least we haven't stunted our dreams and grown over-polite cooped up on some itty-bitty island."

"Don't blame the Brits for the way they are, Maynard. They mean well," said Tugawa.

Bullock walked back home admitting he was dealing with a real slippery customer. But he was sure he would smoke him out eventually.

A wind you could eat with a knife and fork was blowing the snow straight into his face now. But Bullock didn't mind. It reminded him of younger days when he'd driven his dog sled into the teeth of many a blizzard. Somehow he must have rubbed the Mountie dog-master general the wrong way. Other men had lead dogs with names like King, Prince, and Duke. His had been Earl. Earl, for pity sake! Still, the mutt had been a real trooper and gotten him out of many a jam. He smiled, remembering. But after several blocks, Bullock had to step into the doorway of the Ye Olde War Surplus Shoppe to catch his breath.

Stamping his feet against the cold, he stood examining a pair of

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spurred riding boots with elevator soles and heels in the display window. A card said they had belonged to an officer in the Dwarf Uhlans, the Totenkopf Tots as they were affectionately known, a crack German World War I lancer regiment recruited from circus folk. It was traditional for Mounties to exchange Christmas gifts with their immediate superiors. Bullock suddenly regretted he left the shopping to good old Mavis, who this year had gotten Inspector Peter LaPierre a box of fancy soaps. By godfrey, those boots would have been just the ticket. Bullock had long suspected the inspector was a good inch under the minimum height for the Force.

"Which war you a buff of, if you don't mind my asking?" came a voice. A tall man whose expression was at once calculating and hearty was also standing in the doorway and stamping his feet in Bullock's cadence. He wore a fur-lined RAF aviator's helmet, a U-boat pea jacket and khaki army mittens. "It's nothing to be ashamed of, you know," the man continued. "We all got our favorite war. Take it from me."

"Ah," said Bullock, nodding at the sign over the doorway, "then you're—"

"Mr. Ye Olde himself," said the man. "But you can call me Sid." Some Canadian merchants maintained the European custom of standing in their doorways to engage window shoppers in conversations that might lead to sales. But few carried the practice into the depth of winter. Sid looked Bullock up and down. "You know, I pride myself that I can tell at a glance what war a man's a buff of. But you're a toughie."

Bullock was pleased he could be as hard to read as Tugawa. While he and Sid stamped their feet together, Bullock thought about what he'd told the old man, how the elements shaped a people's character. What a display of national unity if someday in the dead of winter all Canadians of every race, color, or creed came outside, linked arms in a human chain that would stretch from sea to sea, and stamped their feet in unison. Bullock could see the headlines now:

NOTED MOUNTIE PATRIOT ORGANIZES
FIRST ANNUAL CANADIAN STAMP-IN.
CRACKERJACK IDEA, SAYS PM.

Suddenly Sid pulled off a mitt with his armpit so he could snap two fingers and point a third at Bullock. "Second Ashanti War, right? Okay, look, your brother-in-law's a big World War II buff, right? They all are. So here's the deal. You give him a genuine Imperial Japanese Navy kamikaze bombsight and—"

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"My eye," scoffed Bullock. "They're scarce as hens' teeth."

"The man knows his war surplus," conceded Sid. "But the fact is, only the used ones are rare. One of my suppliers lucked into a whole boxcar-load on an abandoned railway-siding near Osaka, each beauty in the original packing." He stared out into the snowy darkness. "Some guy almost cleaned me out earlier today. But you buy one for the brother-in-law and I throw in a Garnet Wolseley pith helmet with the spike on it." When Sid turned to drive home the pitch with a smile, he found Bullock had vanished into the night.

Chez Tugawa was closed and dark. But Bullock couldn't let a little thing like that deter him now that the old man had obtained his supply of eyebrow hairs. He waded down the narrow, snow-drifted alleyway beside the building toward the light from the high window in Tugawa's workshop. Time for a little investigating, a little seeing without being seen.

Unfortunately, the window stood above the cellar steps. A less ingenious mind would not have thought to use garbage-can lids to build up one of the steps to make it level with its neighbor and use this as a base for four garbage cans stacked one on top of the other. A less courageous spirit would not have scaled those garbage cans in a keyhole blizzard.

But balancing there atop the cans, Bullock was still too short to peer in the window where a valley of frost crystals obscured the bottom half of each pane. Luckily, a metal bracket that may have once carried a light fixture for the cellar steps protruded from the wall at the level of his stomach. A knee up on the bracket would raise him high enough to see over the ice. But his push off made the top garbage can teeter. He gritted his teeth and held his breath. But it toppled. The others followed, leaving Bullock hanging from the bracket in the snowstorm.

As he waited for the noise to die away, he tried to decide what his next move would be. If he dropped down into the jagged trench of the cellar steps, at worst he'd break a leg or two. Of course Bullock did not fear pain and was prepared to conduct the operations against Tugawa in a body cast. But what if he bumped his head and got amnesia? Tugawa and his people would be free to slaughter the Royal Family and discredit the Force. From there it would be child's play for them to seize power and exact their revenge. They would set the entire country to work at starvation wages, assembling electronic devices to flood the US market. They would institute a radical

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program of population rotation, moving large segments of the Canadian people from one part of the country to another on twenty-four-hour notice.

Yes, and one day years later Bullock's memory would return. He'd find himself in a strange kitchen sitting across from his care-worn wife who'd be assembling cheap transistor radios at piece-work wages. "It's sushi again for dinner," she'd tell him in a tired voice, adding, "And tomorrow everybody on the street has to move to Moose Jaw."

Suddenly the cellar steps filled with snowy light. "Hello again, there, Mr. Tugawa," called Bullock jauntily, trying to keep the effort of hanging out of his voice.

"Ah, Maynard, it's you," said Tugawa, blinking up into the snow.

"I forgot to ask you something, so I came back," said Bullock, whose arms felt like they were coming out of their sockets. "When I saw the lights out, I decided to take a look-see back here. Didn't want to interrupt anything important."

"The Senior Civil Servants' Winter Gala's tomorrow night," said Tugawa. "I'm just finishing up the stetsons. You wait there, okay? I'll fetch the ladder."

By godfrey, thought Bullock, how could he have allowed himself to forget the Winter Gala, *the* event of Ottawa's social season? There was no more impressive sight than the Grand Entrance of the Senior Civil Servants, when those sleek, smooth gentlemen, whose beckoning finger could chill a cabinet minister's heart or make a mining billionaire blubber, descend the magnificent staircase of the Senior Civil Servants Club with their bejeweled ladies on their arms and a stetsoned Mountie at the salute on every other step. Of course, staircase duty was reserved for The Stouthearted Men, the Mountie glee club, whose rendition of "Good Night, Ladies" traditionally marked the end of the evening. But Bullock had worked outdoor security back when the Front Populaire Sociopathique was issuing its bombs and manifestos. Well, protecting the Senior Civil Servants from the FPS would have been easy as pie compared to Tugawa and his blasted brim whistle! And speaking of that villainous gentleman, where in blazes had he gotten with the ladder?

It took a good sit on Tugawa's radiator before Bullock could get his shoulders out of his ears and three cups of tea before he could say, "I came back because good old Mavis wouldn't buy the bushy-

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tailed brighteye story. If you still had that whistle, I thought maybe I could borrow it to show her."

"Thar she blows," nodded Tugawa.

When Bullock saw the yea-long length of bamboo lying on the desk he felt the hair in his eyebrows and moustache creep.

"Our little talk set me wondering where it'd gotten to," said Tugawa. "So I hunted it up. But, well, Maynard, you know how we Japanese-Canadians are about family heirlooms. No, I'll have to keep it under lock and key. But anytime you want to bring Mrs. Bullock around I'll be happy to trot it out."

The words "lock and key" brought a shrewd glint to Bullock's eye. He looked at his watch and pretended to be surprised it was so late. Tugawa walked him out through the darkened shop to the front door and urged him to come back soon.

On the street again, Bullock slipped back down the alleyway and up the rattling aluminum ladder Tugawa had left in place. It seemed to take the old man forever to finish off the stetsons. Bullock was starting to freeze up again. But at last Tugawa went to the desk, took the whistle, and placed it in the bottom drawer. He locked the drawer and stared at the key for a moment, stroking his chin. (He's trying to come up with a hiding-place, thought Bullock, who was proud of this ability he had to read people's minds.) Then Tugawa looked right and left to be sure he wasn't observed and slid the key under the base of his desk lamp. Next he gave an elaborate stretch and yawn. (He's tired and ready to go to bed, thought Bullock.) Tugawa crossed to the door, taking off his work apron as he went. He hung the apron on a peg and reached for the light switch. But then he stopped and tapped his cheek with an upturned index finger. (He's remembered something, thought Bullock as Tugawa turned out the light.)

Because of the aluminum rattle, Bullock decided to remain up the ladder until Tugawa turned on the light in his bedroom. But when it came, the light was from the cellar door. That's what the old man had remembered: to put away the ladder.

If Bullock was discovered up there at the window, his only chance to get his hands on the brim whistle would be lost forever. So he did the only reasonable thing. Hugging the ladder with his knees, he grabbed the guttering under the eaves in both hands, let go with his knees, and swung out into space. Tugawa did not see him there in the darkness as he lowered the ladder.

When the old man shut the cellar door, the wind picked up as if

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on cue. Bullock hung from the guttering. This, he thought to himself, is where I came in.

Bullock arrived at Mountie Headquarters the next morning with the quick step and the scornful eye of a man who'd gone through hell and out the other side. Oh, sure, in those first few minutes hanging under the eaves he'd been as close to panic as a Mountie can come. But then a flailing foot caught an upper corner of the window frame. From this toehold he'd been able to get his elbows into the guttering and his upper chest and a knee had come next. He didn't know how long he'd roamed the wildly aslant and treacherously stormy landscape of rooftops until at last he found a fire escape. But from that night onward he would look on those who used mere sidewalks as a pedestrian crew. ("Roofs are my meat," says noted Mountie catburglar.)

Bullock's stride was determined because he'd come up with a brim-whistle plan. The first thing he did was to offer to pick up The Stouthearted Men's stetsons for them. That gave him his excuse to pay Tugawa another visit that very night.

The old man greeted Bullock with all cordiality. Bullock was careful to pretend nothing had changed between them. He took the offered cup of tea and when asked he described his latest stetson idea, a pneumatic or inflatable brim made up of innumerable tiny air pockets. Breaks or punctures could be repaired with iron-on patches and the whole thing reinflated using a valve concealed under the sweatband. "And here's an added plus," said Bullock. "A half inflated brim could be manipulated to add to a Mountie's repertoire of disguises. For instance, he could fold it up one one side and turn himself into an Aussie tourist."

"Or fold it up in front, add a bowlegged gait, and you've got a fugitive from the Calgary Stampede chuck-wagon race," suggested Tugawa.

A pity so fine a mind had turned from the path of law and order, thought Bullock, getting to his feet. Time to nip the old man's plan in the bud by taking the brim whistle into protective custody. "I'd better be on my way, Mr. Tugawa," he said, nodding at the cleaned, blocked, and individually wrapped stetsons which stood on the workbench in five stacks, ten hats to a stack.

When Tugawa left the room to get a large plastic garbage bag to put them in, Bullock took the key from its hiding place and unlocked the drawer. But the drawer was empty! Oh, good gravy, thought

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Bullock in a doomed voice. He had barely enough time to replace the key before Tugawa returned. As he held the big bag open for Tugawa to place the stetsons inside, Bullock cudgeled his brain for his next move. But no idea came.

Tugawa tied the neck of the bag shut with a big knot and passed the knot to Bullock. "Be careful, eh, Maynard?" he requested.

The windy struggle homeward peering around the immense bag of hats gave Bullock little time to consider his dilemma. At street corners the narrow slits cut in the waist-high piles of curb snow obliged him to raise the bag shoulder high and into the wind, which played the devil with it, pushing him back or grabbing the bag and trying to run with it. The stetsons were almost sideswiped by a bus. Two large drunks staggering toward him arm in arm merited a detour around the block. And Bullock crossed the street to avoid a phone booth with a particularly hungry-looking door. But he reached home with stetsons intact.

Bullock slept badly that night. He dreamed that the United States undertook to build a cinderblock wall from the Atlantic to the Pacific to stem the tide of cheap electronic goods from Canada. But the Mexicans they imported to do the manual labor were all members of a secret brotherhood called Los Amigos de Santa Anna. At a prearranged signal, those on the Forty-ninth Parallel joined with the brotherhood south of the border in a surprise attack on the United States from two sides at once.

But after herding the surviving population into what had once been New Jersey, the Mexicans marched northward toward their real goal, the conquest of Canada. Only a thin line of electronically sophisticated, haiku-writing Japanese-Canadians stood in the way of the vast sombreroed host. The Mexican charge was greeted by knowing smiles from the Japanese-Canadians, who drew their yea-long bamboo brim whistles. But this evoked a triumphant cry from the Mexicans, who pulled live roosters from their knapsacks.

Bullock awoke with a happy start. That was it! Cockcrow made the bushy-tailed brighteye's hairs rigid again. Bullock jammed his feet into his slippers, put on his flannel bathrobe with the totem-pole design on the back, and padded downstairs to the kitchen. Pacing up and down in front of the stove as he waited for the kettle to come to a boil, Bullock rubbed his palms together until they squeaked with satisfaction.

He imagined every Mountie with a rooster on his shoulder to

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neutralize the brim whistle. As the tea steeped and he built a stack of toast, he saw a Musical Ride with roosters. By godfrey, what a sight that would make! But his euphoria died in mid-munch. No, the Force would never go along with the expense, the barnyard air, the sunrise racket around the barracks, the droppings on the tunic shoulder. He wondered briefly if he could talk them into a scarlet fez with a long gold tassel. But who would believe the bushy-tailed-brighteye story without the brim whistle for proof? Shaking his head, he buried his face in a cage of fingers. If he'd been watching himself through a window he'd have understood this gesture to mean: "What have I done? What have I done?"

By godfrey, I'll tell you what you've done, Bullock told himself. You've jeopardized everything you hold dear: Canada, the Force, the Senior Civil Servants. Sagged down by this burden of guilt, he sat hunched at the kitchen table until the morning-dim touched the windows. When at last he raised his eyes they were steady with resolve. All right, he'd gotten himself into this jam, he'd get himself out.

Bullock got up and walked out to the living room. He pulled the bag of stetsons out from behind the chesterfield, positioned it on the carpet, and untied the big knot. Quickly, because there was no point in dragging the thing out, he stepped up onto the arm of the chesterfield and, feet together, he jumped down onto the stetsons. He repeated the jump five times. (Good felt makes a starchy sound when it breaks. There were certain snows Bullock would never be able to walk in again without remembering that morning.) He stomped around on the felt wreckage until the stetsons were beyond all repair. Then he sat down and contemplated what he'd done.

At last the clatter of the morning mail led him out into the front hall. Among the bills and computer spew lay a long narrow package. Bullock ripped it open and pulled out the brim whistle and a note that read:

"That first blow broke all
Partnership. How can hammer
Trust that damn nail now?"

Haiku, thought Bullock.

"God bless you, too, Maynard," the note continued. "A Christmas present from your friend, Egidio Tugawa."

Blast, thought Bullock. Was that it? Had he let an active imagination get the better of him? Sensing his suspicions, had Tugawa led him on? Bullock looked through the living-room doorway and

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blew the whistle. Nothing stirred among the broken brims. Bullock sighed.

When Inspector LaPierre learned why the staircase Mounties would be wearing their winter-issue fur hats at the Gala that evening, he invited Bullock into his office for a demonstration of vile language that would have made a drunken claim-jumper blush. LaPierre delivered this virtuoso performance while walking around and around Bullock in a tight circle. The forty-five-minute ordeal would have broken a lesser man's spirit. But Bullock fell back on what he called his haberdashery defense: at each circuit, when the man raised himself up on his toes to peer into Bullock's face to cap an insult, Bullock would imagine him wearing outlandish bow ties—huge polka dots, mad paisleys, green-and-orange awning stripes. Later in the locker room, a baritone delegation from The Stouthearted Men lay down the rigorous terms under which he would pay for replacing the fifty stetsons. By godfrey, the Bullock household would be on short rations for a long while. He hoped good old Mavis would laugh over the bushy-tailed-brighteye part. Bullock shook his head, thinking how bad things would be if she didn't.

On his way home at the end of the day, Bullock stopped at the big Mountie Christmas tree in the Headquarters lobby. If he didn't bring Inspector LaPierre's present home, he'd have to explain why. The one with his name on it was among a pile of identically shaped and wrapped packages. There was no need for a wondering heft. LaPierre had already told him what it was. And when his wife asked, "But what are you supposed to do with an Imperial Japanese Navy kamikaze bombsight?" Bullock would shrug as if he didn't know. But his ears would burn because LaPierre had told him exactly what he could do with it.

Spring arrived at last with the talk of cold water beneath the old scabs of city snow in the gutters. One foggy morning as Bullock stood in the driveway in front of the Parliament Buildings contemplating the Peace Tower which dominated that noble structure, this came into his head fullblown:

In ignition mist
Peace Towers point heavenward
ICBM-like.

By godfrey, that wasn't half bad. And why not? He felt he'd learned much in the ways of the Mysterious East from Mr. Tugawa and the

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lesson of the brim-whistle business. And surely the code of the samurai couldn't be far from Mountie honor. In his mind's eye, good old Mavis stood in clogs and kimono, a chrysanthemum in her piled-high hair, amid moonlit mountain landscapes above a sea of huge, stylized waves.

As he contemplated this vision, Bullock's look grew more and more inscrutable, and he might have traveled so deep into haiku country that no number of "God bless yous" could have called him back. But just then a stone popped under a tire of an arriving tour bus that had cut its motor and was creeping up behind him. Drivers do this to catch a man daydreaming and make him jump when they point him out to the passengers on their loudspeakers.

That stone brought Bullock back from the other side of the world. He straightened his shoulders, jutted his jaw, gave his eyes a steely gaze, and transformed himself into as fine a bit of Canadiana as ever gave a tourist the thrill of a lifetime anywhere.

"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

GUESS WHO?

by JANET OVERMYER

The housemaid is dead in the attic,
Lord George is done in in the hall,
His lady is stiff in her bathtub,
Their son broke his head in a fall.

The cook's been snuffed out by the gas range,
The trainer lies sprawled on the hay,
As the underpaid butler leaves, chortling,
"That'll teach 'em to cut back my pay."

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a first mystery story by

ANN BAYER

"Does your new book have a murder in it?" Louise asked her sister. Louise wore glasses and wrote captions for a big picture-magazine in New York.

"Possibly."

"And who's the victim this time?"

"I make it a policy never to discuss work in progress," Cora said.

"Just be sure it's not another bespectacled caption writer."

Ann Bayer is a staff writer at Life, *where she has been, on and off, since 1968. Her fiction has appeared in* Harper's, The Saturday Evening Post, Cosmopolitan, Mademoiselle, *and* Seventeen. *Her* Harper's *story was reprinted in the* O. Henry Prize Stories *anthology of 1975. With this impressive background of short fiction, "Blood Relations" can't be claimed for EQMM's Department of First Stories, but it is Ann Bayer's first mystery—and a diabolically well realized one. As our Norwegian friends would say,* "Meget bra gjort." *Very well done . . .*

BLOOD RELATIONS

by ANN BAYER

In June I saw in the paper where my sister's book had made the bestseller list. Bookstores all over the city had it in their windows. Some displayed it on both sides, front and back. The back cover had a photograph of Cora sitting at her typewriter, two blurs sticking out of her sleeves. These were her hands working away at the keyboard. Her face wore a profound expression.

The front cover said, *Dead Giveaway,* A Novel by Cora Stanzione.

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Under these words was a picture of a dead woman lying on the floor. Her glasses were askew. Blood trickled down the side of her face.

The murder victim bore a similarity to an actual person. Me. I read the book so I know. Nor was the resemblance coincidental. For example, the fictional character wears glasses. I wear glasses. The fictional character is thirty-three. I'm thirty-three. (Cora is thirty-one.) The fictional character's name is Lois. My name is Louise. Lois writes captions for a big picture-magazine in New York. So do I. When something newsworthy happens in the world, my magazine usually prints pictures of it. I write where and when each picture was taken, who's in it, and maybe a little something about what's going on. I'm not given much space. A lot of information has to be left out.

One morning a week after *Dead Giveaway* became a bestseller, my boss walked into my office and said, "What I wouldn't give to be your sister."

"Oh?" I finished writing, *"Clockwise from left,"* and looked up.

He said, "Didn't she tell you about the TV deal?"

I said, "How could she tell me about it? We're not in touch. You know that. I've told you that. I must have told you that eighteen thousand times at least."

"I read about it in *Publishers Weekly*," said my boss. "ABC bought *Dead Giveaway* for a four-hour miniseries. The price was somewhere in the high six figures. That kid sure can write."

On my lunch hour that day, I walked into the first travel agency I came to. "I want to go somewhere far away," I said to the receptionist. "I might like to take a cruise." (On a cruise, if you don't like a book you can throw it overboard.) "Only the thing is, I'm scared of getting seasick."

The woman said, "Take a seat over there." She gestured toward a man sitting behind a desk studying his fingernails.

I went and sat down and the man said, "Yeah, what?"

I said, "I'm prone to throwing up so do you think it would be dumb for me to take a cruise?" There was a ceramic troll on the man's desk. I picked it up casually and studied it while the man took his time about answering. The words MADE IN NORWAY had been rubber-stamped under its feet.

"Most ships have stabilizers these days."

"That's a relief."

The man said, "Do you have any preference as to locale?"

"Norway," I said. It was the first thought that came to me. If I

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hadn't just seen it printed on the underside of that troll I would have said somewhere else. I probably would have named a sea.

The man said, "Norway. Gosh, I don't know." He rummaged around in a drawer.

"Ah." He pulled out a brochure. "Here's a stabilizer-equipped vessel that leaves from Göteborg, Sweden, and sails up and down the Norwegian coast."

"When does it leave?"

"The day after tomorrow. Too soon?"

"Nothing's too soon," I said.

I went back to the office and told my boss there was illness in the family and I had to take ten days off. He said, "I hope your sister Cora isn't ill."

"I keep telling you," I said, "Cora and I don't speak. We don't see each other. The state of Cora's health is of no interest to me. Why don't you listen?"

The following evening I flew to Copenhagen, where I changed planes and flew on to Göteborg. There I took a taxi to the pier. It was late afternoon. The ship was called *M.S. Skoal*. I joined the other passengers crowding over the gangplank.

The *Skoal* sailed at six o'clock and an hour later I went to the dining room, where I was assigned to a table for two. A man was already sitting there and we introduced ourselves. When I said my name was Louise Stanzione, he asked if I was any relation to Cora Stanzione. I told him she was my sister. The man, whose name was Baldwin Marshall, told me he'd read *Dead Giveaway* back home in Texas and liked it so much he'd bought it for all his friends. He said I must be very proud to have such a talented sister. I gave a slight nod and changed the subject. I asked him what he did for a living. He said he didn't do anything, he was a multimillionaire. No wonder he liked Cora's book, I thought. All the characters in it—except Lois, the murder victim, of course—are loaded and they all have last names for first names.

During dessert (cloudberries), a steward passed around the next day's schedule of activities. The multimillionaire and I studied our schedules.

10:00 A.M. Shuffleboard: Lars and Asa introduce you to this classic cruise-liner deck-game aft on the Upper Lifeboat Deck!

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11:00 A.M. Bingo!!! See if your luck is today in the Honningsvaag Lounge.

I became aware that my partner was peering around the dining room. "Which one is she?" he asked.

"Who?" I said.

"Your sister," he said. "I know what she looks like from her book jacket but I don't see her."

"Of course not," I said. "She's in New York. I'm traveling alone."

"I don't get it," he said. "What are they going to do? Play a tape of her voice?"

This person's bananas, I thought. I said, "Show me what the problem is." I leaned over the table and squinted at the place he was pointing to on his schedule. Then I located the same place on my own copy.

3:00 P.M. Cora Stanzione will read from her bestselling novel, *Dead Giveaway*, in the Honningsvaag Lounge. Come one, come all!

It's a typo, I told myself, it has to be. "Excuse me," I said. "Something in the Smorgåsbord didn't agree with me." I lurched out of the dining room and made my way to the purser's office, where I asked to see the passenger list.

There we were, in alphabetical order.

Cora Stanzione, Cabin 81, Tromso Deck
Louise Stanzione, Cabin 116, Molde Deck

All night I lay awake brooding. The next day I ordered breakfast and lunch sent to my cabin. I emerged briefly to attend the compulsory lifeboat drill but otherwise remained in seclusion. Then, just after three o'clock, I went to the Honningsvaag Lounge.

The place was jammed, every seat taken, people standing five deep in the back. I squeezed through the crowd. Cora was sitting on a platform at the other end of the room reading her masterpiece. I left and went to the Promenaddäck and breathd the Arctic air. Fjords slid by. Finally a wild burst of applause told me the show was over. Babbling groups of passengers began to straggle on deck. Then a familiar voice shouted my name. "I've been looking for you everywhere! Wasn't the reading fantastic? That sister of yours is really—"

"Listen, I'm in a hurry," I said to Baldwin Marshall. "I have to, uh, buy some stuff at the gift shop."

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He invited himself along. "I can't figure out why you told me your sister was in New York," he said as we made our way down a flight of stairs.

"Don't try," I said. We followed the arrows to the tax-free souvenirbutikk. He stopped to admire some reindeer pelts and I wandered into the next aisle. A woman was peering at a display of Lapp jewelry. I edged toward her and spoke in her ear.

"Greetings, Cora."

"Louise! Where—"

"Surprise, surprise."

"I don't believe it. You!"

"That's right. Me. Back from the dead."

"But what are you doing here?"

"Suppose I ask you the same question. Just when did you develop this sudden fondness for the Scandinavian coast?"

"I didn't come for the scenery. I needed somewhere quiet to work on my new book. A cruise seemed like the perfect solution."

"But why the *Skoal?*"

"I'm here as a guest."

"Who invited you?"

"The captain, actually. He happens to be a fan of mine."

"Louise? Where are you?" Baldwin's voice.

"Does your new book have a murder in it?"

"Possibly."

"And who's the victim this time?"

"Louise, come see what I bought you."

"I make it a policy never to discuss work in progress."

"Just be sure it's not another bespectacled caption writer."

"Oh, here you are. Oh, and your sister."

"Kindly don't tell me what I can or cannot put in my book."

"There's such a thing as libel, you know."

"Aren't you going to introduce us?"

"Not now, Baldwin."

"Shut up, Louise. How do you do? I'm Cora Stanzione."

"Baldwin Marshall. I'm honored."

"Why, thank you. What a lovely thing to say."

"I mean it, Cora. If you turn me into another slain corpse, you'll be sorry."

"I almost forgot. Look, Louise, I bought you a troll."

"What are you going to do? Sue me?"

"Don't think I won't."

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"Won't what?"

"Nothing. Please, Baldwin, I'm trying to talk to Cora."

"And, by the way, Louise, what brings *you* aboard the good ship *Skoal*, may I ask?"

"No, you may not ask."

"You know what I think?"

"Hey, can I buy you girls a drink?"

"I think you found out I was going to be here. I think you decided to come along and bask in my reflected glory."

"You have a sick mind. You always did."

"What about it? We could go to the Bar och danssalong, or maybe—"

"God knows you have no life of your own. You just go to that horrible magazine every day and eke out those little bitty sentences."

"Ladies, ladies."

"Well, so long, folks."

"Louise, wait. This is for you."

Baldwin thrust an object into my hand. The troll. Stuffing it in my pocket, I left the souvenirbutikk and went upstairs to the Bar och danssalong and ordered an aquavit. I skipped dinner. Instead I had another drink and then another. Later I lost at the horse races and nodded through a *Peer Gynt* stereo concert. At midnight I went to bed.

The next morning I was awakened by a voice on the public-address system announcing that all passengers intending to visit the Jostedalsbreen glacier were to assemble immediately in the Honningsvaag Lounge. I dressed and had breakfast. Except for me, the dining room was empty. Then I went to the Promenaddäck. The ship was at anchor. Passengers taking the optional land excursion were making their way down a ramp and onto a tender that would take them ashore. Standing a little apart from the throng were Cora and Baldwin, arm in arm.

After the tender headed off, I went down to the Tromso Deck and loitered in the passageway until I saw Cora's cabin steward go in and begin making her bed. He went into the bathroom for a moment to change the towels and I tiptoed across the cabin and slipped noiselessly into the closet. I waited in that suffocating enclosure, my face pressed against my sister's peignoir, until I heard the steward go out. I emerged gasping. Then I looked around.

A notebook was lying atop a copy of *Dead Giveaway* on the dressing

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table. Cora had written the title *Blood Relations* on the cover and had filled up nearly all the pages with penciled scribblings. I sat down, took off my glasses, and started reading.

Chapter One

In June I saw in the paper where my sister's book had made the bestseller list. Bookstores all over the city had it in their windows . . .

I stared transfixed. There, word for word, was the story I've just written. Everything. My going to the travel agency, flying to Göteborg, meeting the multimillionaire, discovering Cora was on board, running into her, losing at the horse races, half dozing through *Peer Gynt*. What did it mean? Was I a real person or had I become only a character in Cora's new book? I no longer knew.

I got to the part I had lived through only minutes ago—hiding in Cora's closet, then finding her notebook. I had to know what happened next. I read on.

The paragraph that followed described me sitting in Cora's cabin reading her unfinished novel, all five and a half chapters. By the time I finish hours have gone by. The tender returns. I hear Cora's footsteps coming down the passageway. Her key turns in the lock. She walks in and finds me with her notebook. She accuses me of spying on her. I accuse her of spying on me. We argue. As I turn to go, she seizes an icicle she's brought back from the Jostedalsbreen glacier and plunges it into my brain. I stagger and fall. End of Chapter One.

Was this the end then? Me, dead at thirty-three, struck down by my kid sister? Trembling, I went on to Chapter Two.

Here the book switched to the third person. Cora has just murdered Louise. She tosses the icicle into the sink to melt, then leaves the cabin and goes to find the multimillionaire. She tells him there has been a tragic accident: Louise came to her cabin to apologize for the way she behaved yesterday in the souvenirbutikk, she and Louise reconciled, but just as they were stepping toward each other to embrace, Louise tripped and hit her head on the edge of the dressing table. Cora says she dreads the publicity when word gets out about the accident. Wouldn't it be better for all concerned simply to get rid of Louise's body? The multimillionaire is willing to do whatever Cora wants and they go to Cora's cabin and wait. Just before dawn, when most of the passengers and crew are asleep, they carry Louise to the Promenaddäck and toss her overboard.

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Chapter Three. Cora and the multimillionaire fall in love and are married by the ship's captain. Meanwhile, Louise's body is washed ashore at Geiranger, Norway. There is an inquest and her death is ruled a suicide.

Chapter Four. Cora and the multimillionaire settle down in his hometown in Texas. He has an affair with his childhood sweetheart, an oil heiress. Cora is devastated.

Chapter Five. Cora decides to get even with her faithless husband by reopening the investigation into Louise's death. The key witness at the trial is the salesclerk from the souvenirbutikk. She testifies that she distinctly recalls selling the multimillionaire the very troll that was later found in the dead woman's pocket.

Chapter Six. The multimillionaire is convicted of murder and sent to an Oslo penitentiary to begin serving a life sentence. Cora gets a divorce. She returns to Texas.

This was where the narration left off. I put down the notebook and looked at my watch. It was nearly four o'clock. Time was running out. I knew I had only one chance to survive—I had to rewrite my fate. But how? I had never written fiction before. Where did novelists get their ideas? I put on my glasses and gazed out the porthole at the Land of the Midnight Sun, praying that the view would inspire me. Instead I caught sight of the tender approaching the *Skoal*. The land excursion was over! The passengers were returning! I panicked.

Panic—it was all the inspiration I needed. I grabbed a pencil and, beginning with Chapter Two, erased "Louise" and "Cora" wherever the names appeared. For Cora I substituted the name Louise and for Louise I substituted the name Cora. Then I turned my attention to Chapter One. I erased the ending Cora had written and scrawled a new one. Writing captions has taught me to be succinct. I kept my sentences simple and to the point.

Soon I heard footsteps. Cora was coming down the corridor. My hand flew across the page. Cora's key turned in the lock. I finished the last sentence. I put a period at the end of it. I leaped up and positioned myself against the wall. The door opened and my sister entered the cabin holding an icicle. I dug my hand down into my jacket pocket. My fingers curled around the troll. Springing forward, I smashed the troll into Cora's skull. She sank to the floor. I knelt and placed the troll in her pocket.

A chapter of my life was over. But a new chapter was just beginning. I left the cabin and went to find the multimillionaire. I could hardly wait to tell him there had been a tragic accident.

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A *NEW* short story by

WILLIAM BANKIER

"There are two kinds of telephone calls," Neil Tuttle told Maggie Demarco. "The good-news kind and the kind that come from your brother Vinnie."

Neil "Two-Kinds" Tuttle, Montreal broadcaster, is something else. Could it be he's a distant relative of James Powell's Maynard Bullock up there north of the border . . . ?

THE RESCUE OF "TWO-KINDS" TUTTLE

by WILLIAM BANKIER

Neil Tuttle cleared his throat, switched on the microphone, and beamed at Maggie Demarco, who was watching him adoringly from the control room. Tuttle was always effective on the air, but he was especially good when performing for his girl friend.

"There are two kinds of people," he began, "honest and dishonest. Here in Montreal, the dishonest types are in the ascendancy right about now."

The ten-minute essay was a typical slice of Tuttle's radio journalism, low on factual material but freighted with innuendo just this side of slander. He was good at switching on his righteous indignation, communicating it to impressionable listeners, then signing off and slipping away to generate tomorrow's tirade.

"And so," he concluded, "certain members of this community will continue to hide behind a facade of respectability, a public image that shines like a precious thing. But keep this in mind—all that glitters is not gold!" Pause. "Think about it. Neil Tuttle. Good night."

When the couple left the studio half an hour later and emerged

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onto Ste. Catherine Street, Maggie placed a hand on Tuttle's arm to support herself. Another January blizzard had been cleared away by the snow-removal trucks, leaving the pavement icy. She had first been attracted to Neil by his physical presence. A former Queen's University footballer, he had made it as a defensive end with the pro Alouettes because he could move his 245 pounds across the gridiron with impressive speed.

"There are two kinds of telephone calls," Tuttle said as he and Maggie headed down Stanley Street toward the neon-framed entrance of a jazz club called The Blue Tiger. "The good-news kind and the kind that come from your brother Vinnie."

"It must be important." Maggie Demarco had taken the call in the control room while Tuttle was talking to his producer and signing the pay sheet. "He sounded frantic."

"He keeps pressing me to marry you. But he never stops demonstrating how terrible it would be to have him for a brother-in-law."

Pride impelled Maggie to say, "I would *never* marry you. What a boring, stupid, old-fashioned thing to be married. I've told Vinnie a hundred times." She led the way inside the club, booted, furred, preposterously blonde around her dark Italian face. Maggie Demarco was Lara out of a spaghetti *Zhivago*. "This emergency has nothing to do with marriage. It must be something important."

A young piano player in the lounge was trying to demonstrate that lightning could strike twice, that Montreal could produce a second Oscar Peterson. The way he was exploding all over an up-tempo blues suggested he might be right.

In the main room, between sets, the big band's instruments gleamed on an empty stage above the horseshoe bar like shell casings on a battlefield. On a corner stool, Vincent Demarco was posing elegantly in total black and white—suit, shirt, hair, eyes, and teeth. He stood up and gave his sister a torrid embrace—the broadcaster a menacing frown. "Tuttle," he said, "you are in big trouble."

"What I do, what I do?" The former footballer liked to parody the speech patterns of Demarco's gambling companions.

"We heard your broadcast tonight. I was listening in Angelo's office. You can't drop hints like that."

Maggie had ordered and was paying for a round of drinks. "Uncle Angelo loves Neil. You're just trying to make trouble."

"Angelo told me to tell you to cut it out," Demarco said. "Do you want to hear it from him?"

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"We're changing the subject," his sister told him. "I saw your program last night on Channel 2. It was beautiful. I was proud." Vincent Demarco appeared regularly as the star of a televised half hour entitled *Chansons sans Paroles*. The absence of words to these songs—the tunes composed by Demarco—was due to a contract dispute with the lyricist. The wordsmith subsequently vanished near a construction project in the East End. Demarco went on to croon his wordless ballads in a warbling style that had become popular.

The singer beamed and softened. The truth was that he performed less for money or fame than to get his sister to say he was great. "Did you really like it, kid?"

Tuttle's teeth began to grind. "There are two kinds of singers," he announced. "Those who interpret the words and those who murder them."

"There he goes again." Demarco drew himself up to his full height and glared at Tuttle's tie. "I think you better talk to Angelo."

"Come on," Maggie said, leading the way toward the back stairs. "We're going to put out this fire."

The man on the upstairs door knew Maggie and let the party through. The gaming tables were medium busy. The three passed on down the salon, between heavy drapes, along a narrow corridor, and were inspected again by a more menacing guard before being allowed to enter the sanctum sanctorum of Angelo Luxemburg.

"Uncle Angie!" Maggie rounded the desk and applied a competent headlock on the rotund businessman. Only his eyes and part of his tanned, bald scalp could be seen above her biceps. Clearly, he was loving the roughhouse as she flung him from side to side.

Vinnie got down to business. "It seems he doesn't know what I'm talking about."

Luxemburg freed himself from Maggie's stranglehold. "Let's all keep cool," he said. "Tuttle, I like your style. You were tough in football. Now you're tough in broadcasting. But I'm like the stripper who had her gall-bladder out. You gotta let me perform without drawing attention to my operation."

Tuttle said, "I can only repeat what I told Demarco. My broadcast this evening was about crime in general."

"Yeah, yeah," the singer said. "How much else do you know?"

Maggie said, "Vinnie, be quiet."

"Where are you getting your information?" her brother insisted.

"A journalist," Luxemburg pontificated, "can never reveal his sources. That's what I like about journalists. They tell lies and they

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cheat on expenses and they don't care who gets killed. But they don't rat." He gave Tuttle a sympathetic smile. "So let's make this the bottom line. The story you dug up tonight—bury it, Neil."

On their way out of the nightclub, Tuttle and Maggie encountered a dapper man in a tweed overcoat and matching hat entering the bar. "Lucien," the broadcaster said. "Am I glad I ran into you. I need some advice."

"Hello, Sergeant Lacombe," Maggie said without enthusiasm. She had no great love for cops but she tolerated this one because Lacombe and Tuttle played amateur ball together in the summer. "You guys are going to talk hockey or basketball or some other stupefying sport. I'm going home. Call me, Neil."

He kissed her and escorted her out of the front door and then came back to his friend, who had taken a table and ordered drinks. "Let me tell you about a threat," Tuttle said, sitting and describing his encounter first with Vincent Demarco and then, with Angelo Luxemburg, and their warning that he stop hinting about their activities during his radio editorials. "I don't even know what they're talking about."

"Neither do I. I didn't hear your show."

"I have the script with me." Tuttle found the folded pages tucked away inside his jacket. He handed them over, and while his friend browsed the text he sipped his bourbon.

"The only thing I get out of this," Lacombe said, "is the reference to all that glitters is not gold." He handed back the script. "Gold bullion."

"You're kidding. The Sealbond Warehouse robbery?"

"Two million dollars in gold bars. Where has it gone to? It may still be here in Montreal. If Luxemburg's people had anything to do with it, he may believe you were pointing a finger."

"There are two kinds of threats," Tuttle said. "Those you understand and those you don't. The second kind is of no use to anybody."

Lacombe closed his eyes wearily and said, "I've told you before, Two-Kinds. Don't keep on about two kinds."

"What do I do about Luxemburg?"

"Did he lay a definite threat on you?"

"You're saying you can't help until he kills me."

"You got it." Lacombe's mood was improving. "Hey, something good may come out of this. You may be my connection to this bullion

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robbery. Go ahead, talk more about it over the air. Make them itchy. Meanwhile, I'll set up an undercover agent to keep an eye on you."

Tuttle heard the policeman out. "I am not reassured," he concluded. "I could get killed despite your undercover man. No, Lucien, there is no way I'll torment Angelo Luxemburg any further. My broadcasts from here on I will keep neutral."

As sometimes was required by studio commitments, Neil recorded his next radio essay during the afternoon for broadcast that evening. He liked doing this. It meant he could relax and listen in his Westmount apartment, sometimes with Maggie Demarco to keep his hours and his glass filled. But she wasn't with him tonight. She had evolved a theory that Tuttle was behaving unfairly toward her Uncle Angelo. For the time being, she wanted no more of his infuriating company.

"There are two kinds of women," Tuttle had begun to say before she put the telephone down on him. He was not bothered except for having to postpone telling her about his new toy. He had purchased a remote-control device, now installed in his car, that meant he could switch on the ignition while still inside the warm apartment and by the time he went out to the car it would be warm.

Now he turned on the radio and settled back to listen. As always, the sound of his own voice worked magic. Tuttle grinned to himself, flashing secret glances to corners of the empty room as his lecture unfolded. At one point he laughed out loud. At another he said, "Yes, yes!" and shook a substantiating finger at his chrome-plated audio center.

"And so I come again to an inescapable conclusion," the majestic voice rumbled on. "There are two kinds of secrets—those that you tell nobody, and those that you share with only one person. The latter will seldom remain a secret for long. As the poet Francois Villon once said, *'Mais, ou sont les neiges d'antan?'* But where are the snows of yesteryear?" Pause. "Think about it. Neil Tuttle. Good night."

The bottle was to hand. He poured a stiff one and rewarded himself with it. Then he put his head back on the sofa, made himself comfortable, and closed his eyes. One of his favorite fantasies came readily to mind. In pro-football garb, he gathered in a fumble and ran for the goal-line, knocking over one opponent after another. The touchdowns he scored won the Cup. He accepted the trophy and drank champagne from it while 60,000 fans chanted his name—"Two

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Kinds! Two Kinds!" Then the members of both teams sat, squatted, or lay at his feet while he addressed them on the importance of remaining humble, though successful. They hung on every word.

The telephone rang. Tuttle knocked it to the floor, expressing himself in coarse words as he found it. "Very nice," Maggie said when they made contact. "What if it had been your mother?"

"I would have fainted. She died in fifty-eight."

"I have to see you."

"What time is it?" He studied his watch. He had been asleep for five hours. "Three in the morning?"

"You're in real trouble now, Neil. Get in your car and come over to my place. Move it!" She hung up.

It wasn't like Maggie to be so abrupt. Tuttle sighed, put his feet into his shoes, yawned, scratched. Then he remembered his new toy. With a scornful look at the frost-streaked window, he picked up the remote-control unit and pressed the button that switched on the engine in his car parked outside. The blast wave as the car exploded knocked that window and others into shards on Tuttle's broadloom carpet. He looked up at the ceiling, imagining a crowded sky beyond. "It's World War Three," he said aloud. "What a waste."

Then he realized what had actually happened and went to telephone Lucien Lacombe.

"No way I can blame Maggie," Tuttle told the detective, who had finished inspecting the damage. In his heart of hearts, he suspected she had set him up and was wondering how to raise the subject in their next conversation without making her angry.

"She ordered you to drive over. She didn't know about the remote control. Her brother and Angelo Luxemburg are close." Lacombe's sensitive eyes studied Neil's face. "All right, Neil. Those villains could have used Maggie without her being aware of it. They planted the bomb and then they got her to call you."

"So how do I treat it now?"

"Go and see Maggie. Find out why it was so important for you to come over." Lacombe took an envelope from his pocket, found in it a photograph of a man with a hatchet jaw and narrow eyes under a curtain of lank black hair, and showed the picture to Tuttle.

"Terrible camera. Doesn't look anything like you."

"This is Sergeant Lyndon Oliver. One of our best undercover cops. The way the mob is coming after you, we seem to have lucked out.

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If Oliver can get close to them at the right time, we may trap some big fish."

Tuttle accepted a lift in Lacombe's unit across town to Maggie Demarco's flat on University Street. She had always lived close to the McGill Campus, where she worked counseling undergraduate students.

She met Neil at her front door, frowning past him at the departing police cruiser. She needed reassuring, so they went inside and he held her as he filled in the details of the bombing.

"They tried to kill you, Neil. I can't believe it. Vinnie got through to me after your broadcast. He said Angelo told him this time you'd gone too far. They were going to waste you, he said, because you refuse to reveal who's giving you information."

"My editorials contain no information. That's why they come on after the news, as an antidote to all those horrible facts."

A buzzer sounded. Maggie went to the door and let in her brother and two upholstered blue overcoats that had to enter the room sideways. "Did you have anything to do with this, Vinnie?" she demanded. Vincent saw her punch coming, tightened his stomach muscles the way Houdini should have done on that fateful evening, and still had to speak for the next few minutes in short sentences.

"You're going in storage, Tuttle. Angie is out of town—seeing a purchaser. You can still talk. You *may* still live."

"Leave him alone, leave him alone!" Maggie shrieked, tearing at sleeves as the blue overcoats hustled Tuttle down the corridor to the front door.

"There are two kinds of kidnappings!" he called back to her. "Those with an obvious victim, and those where the captors are the unwitting prisoners!"

Demarco groaned. "We may end up killing you on the way to the warehouse, Two Kinds!" And he slammed his sister's front door.

Although Maggie had never liked Sergeant Lacombe, she telephoned the detective and told him what had happened. He didn't sound troubled. He was cheerful, in fact. "Thanks, Miss Demarco," he said. "Everything is under control. We may not see Neil for a few days, but look on the bright side. We are getting a rest from his philosophy."

A few days later the mood in the warehouse was desperate, the guards reduced to sullen frustration while their captive remained optimistic. "You guys never learn," he said, seated on an upturned

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packing case and using a chunk of bread to swab the bean sauce from a paper plate. "There are two kinds of boredom—that which is inflicted upon us and is unendurable—and the other kind. We call it relaxation because it's within our control. Let me tell you about—"

Vinnie Demarco walked in. "Shut up, Tuttle. Don't talk." He addressed the overcoats. "You guys are stupid. Why let him go on like that?"

"We warn him, but he won't quit. Can we kill him now, Vinnie?"

"Soon. Angelo's back in town—he's on his way here. I think you can kill him after that." Demarco smiled and began to hum while conducting an invisible orchestra. "Did you see my TV show last night? I was great. I performed my new ballad—" He began warbling a simple melody.

"What a relief," one of the overcoats said. "It has no words."

"There are two kinds of lyrics," Tuttle began.

Angelo Luxemburg arrived early in the evening, accompanied by his usual entourage. Tuttle counted six, there might have been more. One of them had a hatchet jaw and narrow eyes under a curtain of lank black hair.

"Neil," the heavy-set gambler scolded, "why have you brought yourself to this? I always liked you. But I must protect the interests of my shareholders."

"I still don't know what you're talking about."

"The broadcasts. You spoke of thieves masquerading as legitimate businessmen, and you referred to gold. It could only be our bullion robbery."

"There are two kinds of coincidences—accidental and on purpose. This was accidental."

One of the overcoats shuffled his feet and shifted a heavy object in his pocket.

"Not when taken with your next comment," Demarco said. "Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

Luxemburg nodded, his tiny eyes aflame with curiosity. "Who told you, Neil? How did you find out we have the stuff buried under the big dump of snow in St. Hubert? The place where the trucks empty their loads. That hill won't melt until April. That's when the heat will be off and my customer will be ready to take delivery."

"Hey, that's clever," Tuttle said.

"Don't pretend you didn't know!" Demarco screamed in frustra-

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tion. "Angelo, give us the okay to murder this creep. He's never going to talk."

"There are two kinds of murder—" Tuttle began.

"I can't stand it," an overcoat erupted, drawing his automatic and taking aim.

The broadcaster went on compulsively. "Murder for profit—which *may* make sense—and murder out of spite, which is self-defeating."

"Hold it right there," an authoritative voice rang out. "Everybody freeze." The hatchet-jawed man was holding a sawn-off shotgun aimed at Angelo Luxemburg. "Tell your people to drop the guns."

The boss did as he was told. So did his employees. The man with the shotgun spoke quietly into the front of his jacket. Then he raised his voice. "Okay, it's all over. The team is on its way in. And your comments, Mr. Luxemburg, are recorded on tape."

Neil Tuttle got to his feet, laughing, as Lacombe came in leading a dozen armed officers. While the arrests were being made, he gloated, "What you thugs failed to realize is there are two kinds of policemen—the uniformed variety and the ones who work under cover."

Lacombe was putting handcuffs on Vincent Demarco. "Count your blessings," he murmured.

After the formalities at the police station, Neil invited Lacombe to an expensive restaurant for a celebratory dinner. They were joined there by Maggie Demarco, who listened while Lacombe described the rescue from the police point of view. Inserting Sergeant Oliver had been the trickiest part—but not impossible, given his record of acting on the fringes of the Montreal underworld.

As the steaks were served, Tuttle summed up his feelings. "There are two kinds of rescues," he said. "The kind you just performed—and the other kind, where the prisoner may not really want to be saved."

"Bore, bore," Maggie said, but she touched Neil's hand affectionately.

"She's right," Lacombe said. "I should have let those gunmen knock you off."

"Why didn't you, then?"

"Because my remorse," the detective said, "would have haunted me forever."

"Not necessarily," Tuttle said, holding up his glass so the waiter could refill it. "There are two kinds of remorse—"

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THE JURY BOX
by ALLEN J. HUBIN

I'm encouraged when writers successful in other fields are attracted by the challenge and potential of the mystery story form—and do well with it. We begin with three such examples.

John William Corrington is a Southern novelist, as well as a lawyer and scholar. With his wife, Joyce H. Corrington, he has also written TV scripts and screenplays. Together they offer the first of a crime-fiction trilogy set in New Orleans, *So Small a Carnival* (Viking, $14.95). Wes Colvin, a crime reporter for the *Item,* goes to the bar where his girlfriend, Sandy, works in response to an anonymous phone call. Delayed en route, he arrives to find the place awash in blood, everyone dead. He's devastated by the sight and by the loss of Sandy, but with a black homicide detective and a friend who lost a brother in the abbatoir, Colvin begins to look for answers. Another victim was the aged Auguste Lemoyne, of the famous Lemoyne family, once an implacable foe of the infamous Huey Long. Who was the prime target of the bloodbath, and who else has yet to die? Vigorous storytelling in a well evoked city.

J. W. Rider, "the pseudonym of a best-selling author," begins a series of Jersey City private-eye novels with *Jersey Tomatoes* (Arbor House, $15.95). This is Ryder Malone's territory—Malone, ex-FBI, ex-Jesuit seminarian, his own man. He takes only homicide cases—solvable or preventable. Here Charisma Kelly, atheist proprietor of Christians Anonymous, wants Malone to prove her mother's death was not a suicide. And Cooper Jarret, real-estate developer, unlovable and loaded, is in receipt of threatening phone calls. Death is also active on this Jersey stage and Malone works out his own definition of justice. Stylish, with well cut characters.

J. K. Mayo is the pseudonym of an established author; he debuts in our field with *The Hunting Season* (Holt, $15.95), an artful tale of high suspense by a gifted writer. Anthony Moore's years in Military Intelligence are far behind; now he's a celebrated playwright, returning across the Channel from a sojourn in France writing his next play. On the boat he sees murder done, and a stranger pitches his only play manuscript overboard. His account of these doings is not accepted—till bodies turn up to confirm his story, and some shady types from British Intelligence express an interest. Then to Canada he goes on a writing assignment but someone is manipulating events, manipulating Moore, and killing when it suits him. A playwright against long—perhaps impossible—odds, and a dark hand not recognizable behind it all . . .

Jewish belief, practice, language

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and life richly inform Faye Kellerman's first novel, *The Ritual Bath* (Arbor House, $15.95). In the Hollywood hills, generally isolated from and ignored by the larger community, lies a Jewish yeshiva. But now someone has invaded the grounds and brutally raped a young mother. Peter Decker is a cop with an already full plate—the notorious Foothills rapist, who's practicing his depraved craft with apparent immunity. But this case also goes to Pete, and he comes to know the people of the yeshiva, most particularly a delectable and very orthodox widow named Rina Lazarus. What can come of this for a policeman raised a Baptist when the hills are full of predators and killers?

Anthony Price returns with Dr. David Audley for the 15th time in *Here Be Monsters* (Mysterious Press, $15.95). The 40th anniversary of D-Day brings several old timers to the Normandy coast to remember. One of them, an American named Parker, comes to die—thrown over the cliff by a polite young stranger. This matter arrives at the desk of Oliver Latimer, head of Audley's department while Colonel Butler is on leave. Latimer curiously assigns the very junior Elizabeth Loftus to investigate, with the very senior Audley as her assistant—the same Audley who, a quarter century earlier, had thoroughly investigated Major Parker and his English colleague Haddock Thomas and found them both pure. What sort of games are Latimer and the Other Side playing, and for what elderly mistake must Audley now pay? If you like a literate intrigue novel spare of plot and action, filled with verbal sparring in which almost no one makes a direct statement, *Monsters* is it.

W. J. Burley's series about Superintendent Charles Wycliffe is exceedingly well done, with a fine sense of place and people. The latest is *Wycliffe and the Four Jacks* (Doubleday, $12.95). The superintendent is on vacation in a Cornwall resort town with his wife Helen. They explore the Roseland peninsula and its villages; come to know an eccentric and spectacularly successful author; visit an archeological dig, pubs, and shops. And Wycliffe's profession follows him: a pub waitress of easy reputation dies. Murder by unlikely means it proves to be. Someone is also threatening the author, though he is loath to say much about it. So Helen vacations, and Wycliffe investigates. Most gratifying.

Eliza G. C. Collins is an art collector and traveler down the auction trail, experience and knowledge she uses expertly in her very strong first novel, *Going, Going, Gone* (Scribners, $13.95). Helen Greene took over Boston's Greene Gallery on the death of her father. She's doing well, competing successfully in the tough antique and art business. Now a painting—a landscape by Albert Pinkham Ryder—her gallery sold years ago is coming onto the market again via auction, and she means to have it. So, apparently, do other dealers—including Barton Morley, a protege of Helen's father and someone He-

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len might have loved. Passions at the auction run at last to murder, and the police seem to favor Helen as the killer. Collins does very well by her people; she writes with polish and sound dramatic sense.

Saving Grace (St. Martin's, $14.95) by R. W. Jones is a powerful story, with memorable, complex characters and beautifully developed interplay of dialogue and emotion. Grace Yardley loves her daughter Caroline with vast devotion; she has never had a husband, and Caroline is her life. Until Caroline is kidnaped, raped, and killed. Enter Inspector Evans, Welsh and divorced and vulnerable; enter Nigel Buxton, lawyer, ambitious, daring, dedicated womanizer. What sort of justice can be fashioned here? Fascinating!

Ted Wood's excellent series about Reid Bennett continues with *Fool's Gold* (Scribners, $13.95). Bennett is the sole police officer in the Ontario town of Murphy's Harbour. But here Reid, with his German Shepherd assistant, is doing a favor for his ex-wife, looking into the killing of a geologist in a nearby area in which gold has been discovered. A competent cop runs the town of Olympia, so their verdict of accidental death by bear attack should be right. No mystery, no danger, then, right? Very wrong. And very much page-turning suspense.

Charles Merrill Smith had almost completed *Reverend Randollph and the Splendid Samaritan* (Putnam, $15.95) when he died in 1985. His son, novelist Terrence Lore Smith, finished the novel and promises more in the series. Randollph, you'll recall, leads a mid-city Chicago social organization with religious overtones called the Church of the Good Shepherd. Here comes the matter of the titular humanitarian, a stereo-typical philanthropist (public image lily white, private truth very different). He belongs, in some loose fashion, to Randollph's church. Or, rather, belonged, for someone dispatches him in rather stagy fashion. Disturbing for Randollph and Lt. Mike Casey, especially as the affair becomes policized. And neither of them is aware that their killer has also been busy elsewhere. These are most entertaining yarns, with the ecclesiastical nicely merged with the criminous.

Enough ovelap between the mystery and horror fields exists that you may want to know about *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural,* edited by Jack Sullivan and with a very informed Introduction by Jacques Barzun (Viking, $29.95). This contains some 50 essays and 600 entries, with contributions from over 50 specialists in this field, and will be a valuable resource to those with interests in the horror-fiction direction.

Much good stuff has come recently from paperback reprinters. A roundup of recommended titles . . . From Perennial, a sextet by Dorothy L. Sayers: *The Five Red Herrings, Busman's Honeymoon, Murder Must Advertise, Have His Carcase, Gaudy Night,* and *Lord Peter Views the Body* ($3.95 each); also Douglas Clark's *Performance*

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(in first U.S. appearance), *The Bloody Wood* by Michael Innes, *The Litmore Snatch* and *New Graves at Great Norne* by Henry Wade, and Eilis Dillon's *Sent to His Account* and *Death in the Quadrangle* ($3.50 each). From Little Brown: John P. Marquand's *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto,* and *Right You Are, Mr. Moto* ($4.95 each). From Dell, a quartet by Simon Brett: *Murder Unprompted, The Dead Side of the Mike, Situation Tragedy,* and *Murder in the Title* ($3.50 each). From Bantam: *Last Seen Alive* by Dorothy Simpson, *Live Bait* by Ted Wood, and A. E.. Maxwell's *Just AnotherDay in Paradise* ($2.95 each). From Penguin: Stephen Dobyns' *Saratoga Headhunter,* Howard Engel's *Murder on Location,* Sarah Caudwell's *The Shortest Way to Hades* ($3.50 each), plus Julian Symons' masterful commentary on criminous fiction, *Bloody Murder* ($6.95). From Walker: Jon L. Breen's *The Gathering Place* and L. A. Taylor's *Only Half a Hoax* ($2.95 each). And from Signet, *A Cadenza for Caruso* by Barbara Paul ($2.95).

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LAURA GUTH
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR, SUBSCRIPTIONS

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a *NEW* Captain Leopold story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

"You'll note he's become more active recently and the character of his crimes has changed," Leopold pointed out. "Instead of just cash, he's taking jewelry items now, too. In fact, we weren't even certain that the Hastings jewelry job was one of his until this morning. No one saw him at Hastings. There was just the time similarity. But the security guard who was killed at the library lived long enough to tell us it was the same mask . . ."

LEOPOLD AND THE FOUR O'CLOCK FELON

by EDWARD D. HOCH

The criminal the press had dubbed the Four O'Clock Felon struck for the eleventh time in three months during the early morning hours of Tuesday, June tenth. His crime this time differed somewhat from the earlier ones in two respects. The first was his choice of a target—the South Side branch of the Monroe Public Library. The earlier targets had been more traditional, like all-night convenience stores, laundromats, and drive-in movies playing midnight double features.

Always the technique was the same. He appeared out of the night wearing a rubber mask that covered his entire head and holding a small, foreign-looking pistol. Once he had fired the gun, at a laundromat customer who tried to jump him, wounding the man in the thigh. But until the morning of June tenth, the Four O'Clock Felon had never killed anyone, content to clean out the cash drawers, sometimes lifting wallets as well—always at or about four in the

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morning, wearing the same rubber mask of a smiling, moustached man who looked a bit like Clark Gable.

One might have supposed that a branch of the public library would hold nothing more valuable than a drawer full of fines for overdue books, but on this morning it held something a great deal more valuable—a diamond-encrusted plaque scheduled to be awarded to an author the following evening. The plaque, donated by a local jeweler, was valued at five thousand dollars. That explained the burglar alarm which brought a private security car to the library within minutes. The uniformed guard spotted the thief running through the parking lot and shouted for him to stop. There was an exchange of gunfire and the guard fell, mortally wounded. He lived long enough to confirm that it was the Four O'Clock Felon. Then he died on his way to the hospital.

For Captain Leopold, the murder of Thomas Kenner was no great surprise. As with all serial criminals who used violence, there'd been the growing possibility with each new crime that someone would get killed. "We've got to get him fast," he told Lieutenant Fletcher and Sergeant Connie Trent in the squadroom the following morning. "If he's killed once he won't hesitate to kill again."

"Maybe it'll scare him off," Connie suggested. "I don't think he's a killer by nature. Kenner seems to have fired first."

"He's used the gun twice in eleven robberies," Fletcher countered. "He'll use it again if we don't catch him."

"If it *is* him," Connie replied. "This could be a copycat. Anyone can buy a rubber mask."

Leopold had to agree. There'd been a similar case some fifteen years earlier in which a murderer had tried to cover his crime by making it appear part of an ongoing series of robberies. "Fletcher, check it out. See if the bullet that killed Kenner matches the one they dug out of that man's leg a couple of weeks ago. What was his name?"

"The fellow in the laundromat? Mike Wolzaki. He's a baker who stopped off to wash some things on the way to work. It was just a flesh wound. He was back to work in a few days."

"I might want to talk to him. I also need to see someone who knows about this plaque stolen from the library."

Connie flipped open her notebook. "That would be Professor Stallings at the university. He's chairman of the group called the Friends of the Monroe Public Library that was presenting the award."

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"I'll go see him," Leopold decided, making a note of the name. "I also want a list of all eleven robberies. We have to find a pattern to them, if there is one."

He drove out to the university that afternoon, parking near the Fine Arts Building where Stallings had his office. The professor was a stocky man with thinning grey hair and hornrimmed glasses. He looked as if he'd be at home in a classroom or lecture hall.

"A terrible thing," he told Leopold. "Did Kenner have a family?"

"A wife, no children. I'd like to get some information about this award that was stolen if I may."

"Certainly." Professor Stallings opened a drawer and took out a neatly typed publicity release with an attached photograph. "This should give you all the information you need. The Friends of the Library present an annual literary award to an outstanding modern American writer. This year for the first time the award was to be in the form of a diamond-encrusted plaque donated by David Zeitoff of Monroe Jewelers. It's said to be worth five thousand dollars retail. We thought it would be nice to have it on display for a week before the award, first at the main library, then at our two largest branches."

Leopold glanced at the publicity release. "The award's going to someone named Lockly Holm. Should I know him?"

"He's an outstanding Off-Broadway playwright, part of the New Wave in the American theater. We stress the word *modern* in our awards, and we try to honor worthy writers before they become public favorites or best-sellers."

"The award was well reported in the press?"

"Oh, yes."

"So anyone could have known the plaque was on display at that library."

"Correct. We left it there overnight only because the building has a good alarm system. Of course, the alarm worked perfectly and Thomas Kenner responded at once. It's unfortunate he was up against a killer."

"How did you become involved in this, Professor?" Leopold asked. "It's not a university project, is it?"

"No, I suppose my support of libraries is merely part of an overall love of literature. I've published a volume by that title—*Love of Literature*. My latest book is *Love and Literature*, a study of the wives of famous men writers. The wives are often neglected, you know."

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Leopold smiled. "Like policemen's wives. My own complains because I'm never home."

Professor Stallings laughed. "Some authors' wives complain because they're always home. A different sort of problem."

"What wives did you write about?"

"Well, Frieda Lawrence, of course. Most people know D. H. Lawrence's wife was the cousin of the German war ace Baron von Richthofen, the so-called Red Baron. But Bram Stoker's wife, Florence, is rarely mentioned in biographical notes about him, yet she was said to be one of the most beautiful women in London society. Oscar Wilde courted her during his university days at Oxford, and sketched her portrait. I included her."

"You know a great deal."

"Book knowledge. I envy someone like you, Captain, whose knowledge comes from dealing with humanity on the most realistic level."

"It doesn't always tell me what I want to know, Professor. It doesn't tell me why a thief would always strike around four in the morning."

Professor Stallings shrugged. "Perhaps he's an insomniac."

Mike Wolzaki finished at the bakery at noon, so Leopold had to track him down at his apartment. The baker was a tall, dark-haired man who still walked with a slight limp from his leg wound. "It's coming along," he told Leopold. "Every day is better. I guess I was lucky, especially now that I hear a security guard was killed."

"Where did he hit you?"

Wolzaki indicated the fleshy part of his upper left thigh. "It wasn't much of a wound, but it bled a lot."

"Since this morning's killing, my department has stepped up efforts to catch the man. You're still about the best witness we have. I wonder if you could describe what happened again."

"I made a statement to Sergeant Trent—"

"I know. I've read it. But there's always the hope a witness might remember some new detail."

"Well, I work at the bakery from four-thirty till noon every morning except Sunday and Monday. On the morning of May twenty-seventh, two weeks ago today, I stopped by the all-night laundromat on my way to work with a bag of clothes to be washed."

"Was the place empty when you arrived?"

"No, there was another man unloading his clothes from the drier, but he left while I was loading a machine. It must have been just before four o'clock." He hesitated, as if wondering how much he

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should explain, and then plunged on. "I do my own laundry since my divorce. The wife got tired of going to bed with the chickens every night and fixing me breakfast in the middle of the night, but I told her bakers got to be up early, I have no choice. I can't blame her for the divorce, I guess, but it's hell being a bachelor again at thirty-six."

"Tell me about the man who shot you."

"He came in while I was still loading the machine. I knew I was in trouble the minute I saw the mask—and then he pulled this gun out of his pocket."

"How was he dressed?"

"Jeans and a blue-nylon jacket. Gloves on his hands. I couldn't tell for sure, but I think he was white."

"What did he say to you?"

"Just to keep my hands up and not move. He seemed disappointed there was no attendant on duty with money. Some nights there is. He went to a change-making machine—one of those you put a dollar bill into and quarters come out. He hit it a couple of times with the butt of the gun, but nothing happened. It didn't come open. That was when I decided to jump him, but he was too fast for me. He got off the one shot that hit me."

"What happened then?"

"I think he was as frightened as I was. He said it was my fault he had to shoot. He gave up on the change machine and ran out the door. I was bleeding pretty bad by that time so I got to the phone and called for help."

"Then you don't think he shot you deliberately?"

"Well, it was deliberate enough, sure. Maybe not too premeditated."

"The security guard he killed last night might have fired at him first. That won't carry much weight with a jury, though. It's still murder."

"I hope you get him, Captain."

"We'll get him," Leopold assured him. "It's just a matter of getting him before anyone else dies."

Connie had the list of the Four O'Clock Felon's robberies on Leopold's desk when he returned to the office. He glanced through it, remembering most of them, and was studying it more closely when Connie buzzed to tell him a woman named Ethel James was outside

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with some possible information on the robberies. "Have her come in," he said.

Ethel James was a slender attractive woman Leopold guessed to be in her thirties. She sat down across the desk from him, letting him see a bit of thigh as she crossed her legs. "I don't usually come running to the police about such things," she told him in a deep, husky voice, "but I've been renting a room to a man I think could be your Four O'Clock Felon."

"What's his name?" Leopold picked up a pencil.

"Anthony Yoder. He's in his late twenties and works nights at Banway Electronics. His shift finishes at midnight."

"What makes you suspect him?"

"He was always behind in his rent, but since March he's been on time every month. And sometimes I hear him coming in late, long after the bars close. I live downstairs and he has a room and bath on the second floor."

"That's all?"

"I know he takes his clothes to one of the laundromats that was robbed. The first one, over on Maple Avenue."

Leopold picked up the list of eleven robberies Connie had given him. "We believe all these crimes were committed by the same person, the man the papers call the Four O'Clock Felon. Please look them over and tell me if any of the dates or places could be connected with your tenant, Mr. Yoder."

While she studied the list, he looked again at a copy of Connie's report.

Captain: The robberies began in mid-March and the intervals between them have generally been a week to ten days. I've noted name, date, time, and approx. amount stolen in each case. Connie.

1. *All-Night Pizza, Wednesday, March 19, 4:00 AM—$475.*
2. *Aero Cinema, Saturday, March 29, 3:45 AM—$650.*
3. *Starlight Gaseteria, Tuesday, April 8, 4:10 AM—$400.*
4. *Open-All-Night Shop, Thursday, April 17, 4:00 AM—$965.*
5. *Mainway 3 Laundromat, Friday, April 25, 4:15 AM—$610.*
6. *Cinema 7 Films, Saturday, May 3, 3:30 AM—$745.*
7. *We Deliver Pizza, Tuesday, May 13, 4:00 AM—$1150.*
8. *Food Fair Deli, Wednesday, May 21, 4:05 AM—$800.*
9. *Mainway 2 Laundromat, Tuesday, May 27, 3:55 AM—Fled without cash.*
10. *Display window at Hastings Jewelers, Saturday, June 7, 4:00 AM—Watches & rings, value $2000.*

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11. Monroe Public Library Branch, Tuesday, June 10, 4:05 AM—Plaque with diamonds, value $5000.

"You'll note he's become more active recently and the character of his crimes has changed," Leopold pointed out. "Instead of just cash, he's taking jewelry items now, too. In fact, we weren't even certain that the Hastings job, number ten, was one of his until this morning. No one saw him at Hastings. There was just the time similarity. But the security guard who was killed at the library lived long enough to tell us it was the same mask. And no doubt the same man. If he stole the diamond plaque, he very likely did Hastings, too."

Ethel James nodded. "He came in around five this morning. When I heard about the murder on the noon news I decided to come see you."

"I'm glad you did. It may be coincidence, but it's worth checking into."

"You won't tell him I came here, will you?"

"No," Leopold assured her. "We'll make it a routine check."

After she'd gone, Fletcher arrived with the ballistics report. "No surprises, Captain. The bullet in Mike Wolzaki's thigh came from the same gun that killed Thomas Kenner, the security guard. It was only a .22 caliber, probably a Walther P38 from the description we have. That comes in a .22 LR, a 9 mm., or a 30 Luger model."

"Kenner's luck ran out, getting killed with a .22."

"Plenty of hit men use them nowdays. They're quiet even without silencers."

"They don't use .22 Walthers very often. Makes you think this isn't a pro we're dealing with."

"After eleven robberies he's a pro, Captain."

"I guess so."

Leopold decided to call on Anthony Yoder himself while Fletcher started the long and arduous task of checking pistol permits for anyone who'd registered a .22 Walther. "Someday they'll have these on a computer," Fletcher grumbled. "You type out *Walther .22* and the machine prints a list of everyone in town who's registered one."

"Some departments have it now. Write it out for the suggestion box. Maybe they'll give you a bonus."

"Sure."

Yoder was already at work and Leopold had to put in a request to see him. When he appeared in the company's waiting room he

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seemed more angry than frightened. He was a stocky man with red hair and a bushy moustache. "What's this about—that damned parking ticket?"

"No, it's another matter. They don't send us captains out on parking violations, Mr. Yoder."

Yoder didn't smile. "You shouldn't bother me at work."

"I'm sorry, but this is a murder case."

"Murder? I don't know anything about a murder."

"I'm working on the Four O'Clock Felon case—you've probably read about it. We're cross-checking everyone who was a customer at the places that were robbed. I believe you use one of the laundromats."

"How'd you find that out?" Yoder asked suspiciously.

"And you've been seen out late at night—"

"It's that landlady of mine, isn't it? Ethel got you on my tail!"

"It doesn't matter who—"

"Let me tell you something," Yoder said, his face red with growing anger. "That bitch has been out to get me ever since I stopped sleeping with her. You know what they say about a woman scorned—that's Ethel James. You listen to her, you're wasting your time."

"Where were you till five o'clock this morning, Mr. Yoder?"

"Where was I? I'll tell you where I was—in bed with a woman who's a hell of a lot better than Ethel James. And you can tell her that for me!"

"I'd suggest you find a new apartment, Mr. Yoder," Leopold told him.

Only three days had elapsed between the Felon's tenth and eleventh robberies, and there was no reason to suppose he'd stop with the eleventh. As the next few days passed without a break in the case, Leopold's violent-crimes squad grew noticeably tense. Every possible lead had been followed, with Connie Trent even attending the library ceremony where Lockly Holm was to have received his diamond plaque. The playwright was gracious and the jeweler, David Zeitoff, assured him the plaque was covered by insurance and a replacement was in the works. Professor Stallings introduced Connie to the guest of honor and some of the library people. She didn't know exactly what she'd hoped to discover by attending the ceremony, but if there was anything unusual it escaped her eyes. The next morning she told Leopold, "Just a lot of dull people. The robbery is probably the most exciting thing that's happened to them in ages."

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She walked over and stood looking at a large-scale wall map of the city, which Fletcher had marked with red-topped pins indicating the location of each of the Felon robberies. "Funny thing," she remarked.

"What's that?" Leopold asked, only half paying attention.

"They almost form a pattern, a circle around the inner-city area. It's like a clock, with the only gap over on the east side where the three would be."

It was on Friday morning, shortly before five, when Leopold was awakened from a dreamless sleep by the ringing of his bedside phone. During their two years of marriage, Molly had learned to more or less ignore the frequent middle-of-the-night summonses. Now she came awake enough to mutter, "What is it?"

"Another robbery. Go back to sleep."

"Won't he ever stop?"

"Not until we catch him."

This time it was another jewelry-store window, Zeitoff's on East End Avenue. The glass had been smashed at exactly 4:00 A.M., as if the robber wanted to leave the police no doubt as to his identity. The alarm had brought police cars to the scene within ninety seconds, but the Four O'Clock Felon was nowhere in sight. White-haired David Zeitoff, arriving at the scene shortly after Leopold, estimated his loss at about three thousand dollars.

Connie remembered the jeweler from the library award-ceremony. She said, "The Felon seems to have shifted his target from all-night stores to jewelry shops. There was Hastings and then the plaque at the library and now your store. Can you think of any reason why he might have picked on you?"

Zeitoff shrugged. "Maybe he read about the library ceremony in the papers and figured if I donated the plaque I must be good for something more."

"How many branches do you have in the city?"

"Four, including the downtown store."

"This isn't the largest of them?"

"No, it's one of the smallest, in fact. He'd have done much better on the West Side."

Leopold requested a list of the missing items. "He'd have to sell these through a fence, wouldn't he?"

Zeitoff shook his head. "Not really. We never leave our most val-

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uable items in the windows overnight. These rings and watches could be peddled in New York's diamond center with no questions asked. No one gets too suspicious over a three-hundred-dollar diamond ring or a two-hundred-dollar wristwatch."

Leopold decided David Zeitoff wasn't too worried at his loss, either. He treated the whole thing as a minor annoyance, one of the necessary expenses of doing business.

Back at the squadroom, Connie went to work on the wall map. Leopold, still feeling the effects of his abbreviated night's sleep, started looking back through the growing file on the Four O'Clock Felon. "Connie?"

"What is it, Captain?" She was drawing some lines on the map, dividing the city like a pie chart.

"Who were the officers who responded to the second laundromat robbery? The one where Walzaki was wounded."

"Pete Cummings was the one I talked to. Want to see him?"

"I'll catch up with him later. What are you doing there?"

She'd completed her work and stood back to admire it. "The twelfth robbery this morning closes the circle, Captain. If you draw twelve lines radiating out from the center of the city, dividing it like a pie, you can adjust it so you have one robbery in each segment of the pie. I cheated a little to get this drive-in movie to fit, but you get the idea. My guess is that he wanted to be sure of spreading himself around, not hitting the same neighborhood twice."

"I don't know. I have a hunch it's two different people."

"The gun was the same in the two shootings, Captain."

Leopold stared bleakly at the map. "So is he going to quit at twelve or start all over again?"

He was in the police garage that afternoon when Pete Cummings came on duty. "How's it going, Pete?"

"Can't complain, Captain. I hear the Felon was busy again this morning."

"I'm afraid so. You work the midnight shift some weeks. How many of the Felon robberies have you investigated?"

"Just two. The Gaseteria and the laundromat where the guy was shot."

"That's the one that interests me. He ran off without his loot after the shooting—almost as if he was unnerved by having to use the weapon. But two weeks later he killed the security guard with the same gun."

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"Wolzaki was enough to unnerve anyone. Was he angry! You should have seen him. If he'd caught the guy who shot him he'd have torn him apart. I had to call the Star Bakery for him and tell his boss he was in the hospital. And he had to bring his bag of dirty laundry along so it wouldn't get stolen. He said after that night he wouldn't trust anyone."

"Did you get a look at the Felon?"

"Not that night. I *might* have glimpsed him at the Gaseteria—but that was only the third one and we hadn't realized it was the same guy. I saw this fellow driving away and I thought his face looked kind of strange. I realized later he was wearing this damn rubber mask over his whole head. It was dark and at a quick glimpse I thought it was his real face."

"It happens to all of us," Leopold said.

At home that evening he brooded in silence, finally driving Molly to remark, "You might as well be down at the squadroom—you're there in spirit."

"I'm sorry, Molly. This Felon case has me down. I have a feeling there's something I'm not seeing." He told her a little about the investigation.

"If Connie's right, he may be all finished," Molly said. "Maybe twelve robberies were all he ever intended."

"With a total take of only a little over $15,000 for all that work?"

"Everyone doesn't think big. If it wasn't for the killing you wouldn't be spending so much time on this. Maybe he just wanted to pull off a dozen nice little robberies without attracting so much attention. It was just chance that he had to shoot two people."

"Bad luck," Leopold agreed, and suddenly—

"What is it?"

"I was thinking about luck."

He thought about it all weekend, and Monday night he told Molly he was setting the alarm for three o'clock the following morning. When the alarm woke him, he got up, dressed, and went out, without telling her where he was going. She knew it had to do with the Felon case and that he'd tell her about it when the time came.

He went out again at three o'clock Wednesday morning, and Thursday. He figured he'd give it up to eleven days, since the Four O'Clock Felon had never waited longer than eleven days between his crimes.

He sat alone in his car on a dark side street and listened to the

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city's police calls. Robberies, rapes, a stabbing in a bar, all the reports that would be crossing his desk the following day. But nothing that sounded like the Felon.

"Maybe the Felon is a woman," Molly had suggested one morning as he was dressing for his lonely vigil.

As he sat in the car on Thursday morning at five after four, he thought about that. Maybe the Felon *was* a woman and his whole elaborate theory was wrong. Or maybe the Felon was Zeitoff the jeweler, involved in some kind of scam.

At 4:10 the radio brought the report he'd been waiting for. "Attention all midtown units. Armed robbery in progress at the Owl Drugstore, 1100 Franklin Street. Use caution. It looks like the Four O'Clock Felon."

Leopold sighed and got out of his car, unsnapping the strap on his belt holster. He knew he was right. He'd known it all week.

He walked along the dark street toward a small, lighted parking lot. He walked slowly, figuring it would take the Felon at least ten minutes to get here from the drugstore.

When the car pulled up, he recognized it at once. He'd seen it on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, too. He was waiting at the parking space when the car stopped, the driver turned off the ignition, and the door on the driver's side opened.

Leopold had his gun out. "Thirteen was your unlucky number, Felon. You're under arrest. You have the right to remain silent—"

Mike Walzaki came out of the car fast, slamming the weight of the door against Leopold's arm. Off balance, Leopold saw the Walther appear like magic in the baker's hand. He aimed at Walzaki's shoulder and squeezed the trigger.

It was already daylight an hour later in the employee parking lot at the Star Bakery. Walzaki had been taken off to the hospital and Connie had been summoned from her bed to help wrap things up. "I thought you'd want to be in on it," Leopold told her when she arrived. "Your theory with the map was correct as far as it went."

"I can't take any credit for this one, Captain. I never gave Walzaki a thought. I considered him a victim."

"That's what he wanted us to think. He was really a somewhat inept, bad-luck thief. At the laundromat that night, he went in with a sack of wash, pretending to be a customer. There was no attendant on duty and when the other customer left he was alone. Maybe he didn't even bother with his rubber mask. But he hit the change-

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making machine with the butt of his pistol, just as he told us the Felon had. That was a dangerous technique. The weapon discharged and hit him in the thigh."

"I can't believe it!"

"So there he is, the Four O'Clock Felon, bleeding from a self-inflicted bullet wound, about to be discovered by the next customer who walks in. What does he do? He turns defeat into victory by becoming a victim. The rubber mask and gun go into his laundry bag, surrounded by dirty clothes so the gun won't make a thump when the bag is set down. He calls for help and goes to the hospital to have the bullet removed, taking the laundry bag with him. The officer never thought to search it, of course. Nothing was stolen, and the bandit was long gone."

"How did you know it was Walzaki, though?"

"The Felon robberies occurred on every morning of the week except Sundays and Mondays. Those were Walzaki's days off at the bakery. He started at four-thirty in the morning and the thought occurred to me that the Felon might choose that time for his robberies because he was just finishing or starting work around that time. Then there was the matter of Wolzaki's laundry. He told me he arrived at the laundromat just before four o'clock to do his washing. But he started work at four-thirty. It was impossible for him to wash and dry his clothes in a half hour. When I considered the possibility he was lying, I had to consider the possibility he was the Felon himself. Molly said something to me last week about luck, and I thought about bad luck. Wolzaki had the bad luck to shoot himself."

"That was all?"

"No, there was also the sudden change in his methods. They'd all been armed robberies, at gunpoint, until the aborted laundromat job. Then the Felon suddenly changed to smash-and-grab, stealing from jewelry-store windows and libraries. Why? It seemed like two different people to me, but you reminded me the weapon was the same. And he kept to the pattern on your map. But the change in technique meant he didn't have to operate in front of witnesses. No one saw him rob the jewelry stores, and he killed the only witness to his library break-in. Had anything changed for the Felon after the laundromat robbery? Had anything changed for Mike Wolzaki? Yes, the wound in his leg had left him temporarily with a noticeable limp."

"Of course!"

"He changed his technique because witnesses would remember

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the limp. Kenner would have mentioned it if he'd lived long enough. But this morning his limp was almost gone and so he returned to his original technique of armed robbery."

"Why didn't he just lay low for a few weeks and not commit any crimes?"

"He probably wanted to keep active so we wouldn't connect him with the Felon."

"So you knew he'd strike again and you waited here at the bakery."

Leopold nodded. "A few blocks away. I didn't know where or when he'd strike, but I knew he'd come here to work right after a hit, so I waited for word of an early-morning robbery and came over here to confront him with the gun and the mask and whatever he got from the robbery."

"But how did you know he'd try one more? How did you know he wouldn't stop at twelve when he seemed to have completed his pattern?"

Captain Leopold smiled. "Baker's dozen," he replied.

DETECTIVERSE

PSYCHO

by EDWARD LODI

His loves were mixed up with his hates.
He acted strangely with his dates.
He liked to dress up like his Mom—
A regular cut-up, Norman Bates.

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beginning a *NEW* series by

THOMAS ADCOCK

Meet Fred Walsh, former newspaperman now writing for a slick monthly magazine called Detroit Expression. *He doesn't particularly mind being known as "Big Red Fred," but he'd like it better if it was more widely understood among the youngsters where he works now that the appellation goes beyond the helpless facts of his height, his given name, and what remains of his carrot-colored hair . . .*

NO JURY WILL EVER HANG YOU

by THOMAS ADCOCK

About a year ago he started showing up regular for breakfast at Busy Betty's Cafe on Cass Avenue. That's where I've had my ham and eggs just about every morning since 1945 when I got back home from the war and went to work as a newspaperman. Later on, I'd come across him drinking in the early evening, too—over at the Athens Bar on Monroe Street, which is where I've been cashing my paychecks going all the way back to when I was a cub on the *Detroit Times*, may that old Hearst rag rest in peace.

You get to know some terrible truths about your average stranger when you talk to him coming and going like that, day after day. You can hardly know the average man at his work, since that's where he's generally on his best false behavior. And a man's conduct around his loved ones, so to speak, can reveal too much of the dark side of his personal moon. So the best place to know a man is in the morning over breakfast and in the evening over booze.

And so when he turned himself in to the cops, I suppose I knew

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more about Barlow T. Lundy than I did about anybody else of my acquaintance. And that includes Old Sexy, who is my wife going on forty years and whose preferred name is Jean.

Of course, Barlow would point out how that's no comparison to speak of—naturally I'd know more about a drinking buddy than my own wife. And Jean is a woman, which is to say a shady character. That's how Barlow had it figured, anyway.

He told me once, "No man in the history of the world has ever cracked the secret code by which women work their will upon us." I joked with him about how that must certainly be true because the exact same thing could be said about the secret men's code that seems to have baffled all the women in the history of the world. That's when I first noticed the tic in Barlow T. Lundy's right eye and how his blue jowls shook when a bit of barroom badinage got the better of him.

Some nights when my eyes are closed and I'm waiting for sleep, like tonight, I picture us chatting at the bar like we used to. Funny how much more clearly I see him then than when I was wide awake staring at his face. I remember how he'd tip back a bottle of beer—how his hand would tighten around the cold, wet glass, how he'd lift it slowly to his lips and squint like he was in some awful pain and then take a long pull. Then he'd set the bottle back down on the mahogany and start laughing at nothing in particular. Barlow T. Lundy laughed a lot, but I don't believe I ever saw him smile.

He talked about his family—his young wife and his little daughter here in Detroit and about the folks back down home in Paducah. He spoke of them like they were rare, sweet dream creatures, far too goodly to occupy this ordinary and brutal plane. Everybody at Busy Betty's and the Athens Bar had seen the snapshots in his wallet about a thousand times.

With me, he liked to talk of philosophical things. Like the old days and how much he missed them. And books. "You're a sort of writer," he informed me. "Well, a journalist, anyhow. So you know what I mean when I tell you how much I love books. Books are precious friends that don't betray you like people do." That's typical of the sort of thing he'd say that wound up having a strange edge to it.

If he had any money at all, Barlow T. Lundy was quick to buy you a drink. And he left hefty tips at Busy Betty's, even though there was want at his house. He wasn't flashy about this, however. His generosity had a courtly, southern quality to it. He was self-

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taught and truly smart, because even though you might know less than he did you never felt stupid around him.

But he was hot-tempered sometimes, like some men are—like anybody is who hates himself enough. If some guy bothered him at the bar, Barlow could flake him off with wit. But sometimes he'd taunt a lout with a physical threat, which was foolhardy since the whole idea of such encounter is to attack your antagonist where he's weakest. Consequently, Barlow often sported a split lip or a broken nose or a purple bruise. He was only ten years younger than me and I wondered how in hell he'd made it that far.

I didn't wonder about Barlow's contradictions quite enough, though. The signs of his darkening angels were there, all right. Troubled people put out all manner of obvious signs, but we mostly go blind when they do—otherwise, we'd come perilously near having to account for similar demons in ourselves, I suppose. Human nature is richly perverse.

Now it's past midnight into a Monday morning and I'm telling myself, again, that I should have known about my friend, that I shouldn't have been stunned like I was, that I might somehow have kept him from doing what he did. Old Sexy lies warmly next to me, making soft, slumbering sounds. I touch her bare shoulder and know I'm no better a man than Barlow T. Lundy, that nobody else is, either. We're most of us just luckier.

And I feel myself drifting into the safe harbor of sleep in my own house.

Lundy did not sleep yesterday, he told me. Nor is he likely to be asleep now. He is sitting or lying on a steel cot next to an open steel toilet bowl and a steel sink behind the steel bars of a two-man cell at the Wayne County Jail. He tells me that he spends the daylight hours reading or playing knock rummy with his cellmate and that when it's dark he thinks about meeting his Maker. And when he's not doing those things, he's listening to the guilt howling inside his head.

My byline reads Fred Walsh, but that's not exactly what they call me. I don't particularly mind being known as "Big Red Fred," but I'd like it better if it was more widely understood among the youngsters where I work now that the appellation goes beyond the helpless facts of my height, my given name, and what remains of my carrot-colored hair.

They started calling me Big Red Fred back in the Fifties when,

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due to my sins against the prevailing style, the only newspaper job I could get was Detroit correspondent for *The Daily Worker,* which was in those days the organ of the American Communist Party. This wasn't my first choice for an employer, but Jean was pregnant again and we needed a steady paycheck, even a small one. Damn me if I didn't insist on working in my own damned craft!

I was out of more respectable work because of the blacklist that was all the rage against guys like me at the time, which was merely one manifestation of the pall of suspicion that hung over the land and which so advanced the political and legal careers of so many who richly deserved to be suspected of bona-fide grubbiness. The *Detroit Times* canned me when it was discovered by a hyperambitious assistant publisher with clammy hands and a ferret chin and little to do that I'd once attended underground lectures given by a notorious Marxist-Leninist cheerleader from New York. Even worse, there was incontrovertible proof that I'd recently joined up with an outfit that included the notorious Dashiell Hammett on its national letterhead, this being a small but noisome effort to deliberately flaunt various municipal laws against selling real estate in certain big-city neighborhoods to persons of unglamorous races.

The proof of this second and far more serious charge was my own breezy confession to the dastardly scheme. I told the executive rodent with the moist paws that I was, in fact, Hammett's number-one operative in the Detroit branch of the conspiracy. That was a bald lie, as I'd never so much as met the man, though I sure wish I had. As far as the notorious lectures were concerned, I told him, the year was 1939 and I was a kid in college with a slim waist and thick hair and I was hot for a brunette bohemian coed named Gloria something-or-other who lived in a drafty little flat on West Prentis Street near the Wayne State University campus who thought it was terribly keen and daring and modern to have Commies drop by for tea and cakes. I usually took a snooze when the true-believers cranked up. Gloria eventually broke my heart by running off with some Russki with funny little spectacles like Trotsky wore and that's the last I had to sit through those lectures.

The publisher's inquisitor was duly horrified, and so, as I say, one fine week there was a pink slip in my pay envelope. Everybody in the city room seemed to know it was going to be there. My editor shook my hand and wished me luck, but he wouldn't look me in the eye. I was rattled at first, with our second one en route, but Old Sexy made me a splendid steak dinner and said, "With the passage

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of a bit of time, my dear, many tragedies are revealed as comedies." So I decided to make the most of things as I found them.

I signed on with *The Daily Worker* when it was abundantly clear that I was getting nowhere with the press lords of Lafayette Boulevard, which is where the *News* and *Free Press* compete a few blocks apart. They seemed nervous when I came calling with my resume and my scrapbook of clips, like maybe Joe McCarthy might get wind of our meeting. So the Communist Party of America, bless its little red heart, gave me a job. They set me up in the Buhl Building with a tiny office and a Royal standard manual, $52.50 a week before taxes, and a Rubenesque secretary who put away a pair of hot fudge sundaes every workday at the Sander's on Woodward Avenue.

Life wasn't bad. Jean and I had our health, we had our bungalow at 8627½ Penrod Street that I owned courtesy of the G.I. Bill, I had enough cash coming in to keep everything going along, plus a backyard rose garden for Jean. And I could write whatever I pleased in *The Daily Worker* as long as it had something to do with ruling-class hypocrisy or the poor and/or downtrodden—which was okay with me.

I wasn't much in the habit of paying attention to the stuff that came by post from the party's front office, which is to this day a scabid old brownstone on West Twenty-third Street in Manhattan. Everything they sent was as turgid as the yammering I remembered from Gloria's place back in '39 or else it was printed in Russian. But one day my Comrade Editor had a swell suggestion for his cocky young Detroit bureau chief: "It is requested that you seek to join the Detroit Press Club to expose the capitalist sham of the so-called free and unbridled American press."

So I did, with predictable results.

I didn't want the weekly press-club meetings to conflict with my long-established bowling night, so I told one of the radio boys in town that I wanted to observe the "running-dog press" from the inside. After he broadcast our little chat, I was labeled a "Red stooge" and my name never got out of the membership-committee session.

And that's the story about how I got tagged as Big Red Fred.

The only trouble with having your name trivialized is that it's easy for people to think your work is trivial, too. I honestly thought I offered a lot of serious thought in my pieces for the old *Daily Worker,* even though it was routinely denounced in Congress, and other such forums of probity and intellect, as the devil's own scripture.

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My line of interest as a newspaperman had always centered around the goings-on at number 1300 Beaubien Street, which is headquarters of the Detroit Police Department, conveniently situated around the corner from the Athens Bar. I started in the press room there for the *Detroit Times* and discovered that nobody is more downtrodden in this world than some poor sap coming into that place in manacles and maybe on his way to the rubber-hose room.

I refined my crime-writing in *The Daily Worker* through the Fifties and Sixties, and although my readership was limited I had my fans. A couple of years before I retired, the establishment press decided to forgive me, and both the *News* and *Free Press* offered me a job. I liked the change of heart, but I didn't like the changes I saw in the city rooms. They don't have typewriters in city rooms any more—they have things called "video display terminals" and the keyboards are quiet as a cat burglar's shoes. Also, the reporters look more like insurance salesmen than reporters and nobody smokes. So I decided not to forgive them.

But I'm now writing for, of all things, a slick monthly magazine called *Detroit Expression*. It's mostly about restaurants and pricey clothes and something called power lunches and where to have such meals. The kids who run the shop like having an old codger around to write about grittier matter and they think it's keen and daring and modern of them to invite an old lefty into their parlor. Everything has a way of coming back around, I've found. Jean likes my little retirement job because she was getting sick and tired of having me come home so soon after breakfast at Busy Betty's Cafe.

I'm not your ordinary crime writer, some dull-eyed shill for the cops and the commissioners and the mayor's public-relations jerk. Say I've got something like a guy who killed his wife of twenty-five years. I'm not going to serve up the usual names, ages, and a nice clean checklist of what, where, when, and how he did it to the little lady—maybe with a couple of quotes from the cops and some from neighbors who are dependably shocked because he was such a quiet man and they made such a lovely couple. What I would do is understand that I had a case of a man who twenty-five years ago so loved a woman that he married her and then twenty-five years later hated her so bad that he cut her up with a butcher knife or shot her or something. Then I'd try to piece together what had happened to the lovely couple over those twenty-five years that led to that single flashpoint of violence and death. That would be my kind of story.

I tried to explain this once back in the Fifties when they hauled

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me up before the House Un-American Activities Committee to tell them what I was doing for *The Daily Worker* to assist in the overthrow of my government. (I'd always appreciated my government, especially when I got the loan on my house with no questions asked besides my name, rank, and serial number.) I was grilled for about an hour by an intense, dark-eyed guy from California with a ski nose and a puddle of sweat on his upper lip. He seemed absolutely certain about absolutely everything, which is how most people carry on who read little or nothing.

"Just what are your duties for *The Daily Worker?*" he asked.

"I hang around places and try to pick up on any good crime yarns," I said.

"Aha!" he bellowed. "And just what is your notion of a 'good crime yarn' for a Communist newspaper?"

"Well, sir, you might say I have a Dostoyevskian view on crime and punishment."

First, the guy with the drip on his lip gasped. Then there was a whole chorus line of gasps from the rest of the panel and the press gallery, too. The honorable Congressman then smiled like an alligator and said "Aha" again and the photographers leaped all over themselves to get his picture.

I watched the grinning Congressman closely as he posed and found him fascinating—and I figured maybe I ought to hang around and that sooner or later I'd have myself a whopper of a crime yarn. I had him pegged for a guy who leaves gummy footprints wherever he goes. But instead, I took the train out of Washington back home to Detroit where I belong.

When Jean heard about my Dostoyevsky gag we had a very fine laugh about it. Then we had a couple of belts each of Stolichnaya in tribute to God-fearing, red-blooded American codsheads.

Nowadays, I'm doing more or less the same as always at *Detroit Expression,* and once when this kid who edits the thing asked me what kind of car I drive, which is a very big topic of conversation in this town, I told him, "One of those foreign jobs, a Tolstoy." And he said, "Is that the one with the rotary engine?"

I'm not entirely comfortable with the magazine, but I'm far more respectable, which I regret some. But it's nice not to be on Jean's nerves at home and it's nice to be telling good crime yarns again.

Like the one about Barlow T. Lundy.

You can begin to understand Barlow T. Lundy by understanding

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something about Detroit in the 1980s. This is a city that has a bad habit of taking windfalls for granted. A lot of good things have happened for us in Detroit and one by one we've waved them goodbye.

I'm an old man, but there are lots younger than me who can tell you how guys in backwater towns, guys like Barlow T. Lundy and my own daddy and uncles, would shoot any angle they had against the chance of coming up north to Detroit for a job with a brisk wage making Fords or Chevrolets—or Packards and Lincolns and Cadillacs that were nothing short of rolling sculpture once upon a time.

"Remember those grand old days?" I'd say to Barlow.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "Times were rough then, but certain things were sure, you know? Franklin Roosevelt was always the President, Joe Louis was always the champ, and Paul Muni played everybody in the movies."

"And if you landed a job in Detroit then, by God, you were set up for life."

It was a big, clanging lunch-pail town with noon whistles in every neighborhood to prove it. The working man was rightly proud of himself, the managerial class hadn't mucked up too much as yet, and the rich worried more about proper attire for the symphony ball than they did about murders. Blacks were still a minority and still docile and lived crammed into one enormous ghetto on the near east side and a couple of satellite ghettos to the west, and practically nobody else wondered if that seemed right.

"I remember the big Stroh's brewery at Lafayette Park and how it smelled like a bakery on a cold morning," I'd say. "And there were red-and-yellow electrified streetcars that took you everywhere. The Vernor's plant up on North Woodward Avenue made the finest ginger ale in the U.S.A. and the Labor Day parade from Cadillac Square was the envy of Moscow. And you could buy anything you ever wanted downtown at J. L. Hudson's department store."

Gone are Stroh's, Vernor's, and Hudson's. Gone, too, are the streetcars. They were sold to Mexico City and replaced by a fleet of smelly buses that take forever to get to fewer and fewer places worth going to. On Labor Day, only we old-timers show up with union buttons in our caps. A pathetic sort of drum-and-bugle corps and a solid-legged baton twirler lead us on our shuffle from what's now called Kennedy Square. Young guys with union jobs are out in their sailboats on Lake St. Clair and can't be bothered with a parade. Tens of thousands of guys with no jobs sit around the house drinking

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canned beer and picking fights with their wives and kids and dogs, or else they'll prowl for deposit bottles amidst the broken glass and weeds of vacant lots.

Gone is the Sander's where my secretary at *The Daily Worker* maintained her chocolate regimen and you can only get the stuff today if you drive out to the suburbs. But it's not the same. Now a sundae comes in a plastic thing instead of a crisp white waxed-paper cone cradled in a stainless-steel dish. Teenagers work the counters out there in the suburbs and they're always chewing gum and I think they'd drop dead without the constant din of music I understand is known as "heavy metal."

"Oh, God, the music back years ago," Barlow would say. "Before I escaped Paducah, I'd tune my radio at night to the clear-channel station from Detroit, WJR. Charlie Parker's stuff, and Helen Forest singing with the Benny Goodman orchestra. And Ellington!"

Barlow T. Lundy and men like him had a vision of Detroit as the place where all the extravagant dreams a hick could muster would come true. Friends from their own towns had made good up there and liked to say that if they could, anybody could. They had plenty of money to throw around on trips back home and they talked of things like great libraries and museums and nightclubs where even factory hands could go, and men like Barlow T. Lundy began to hate the sights around them, the Bible billboards and the gasoline stations and the bait-and-ammo shops and farmers spitting tobacco outside church.

Barlow picked up one day and just walked north with a Standard Oil of Ohio roadmap in his pocket, the route to Detroit marked neatly in pencil. He didn't want to hitchhike because he was afraid of being slickered and, besides, he considered it charity.

He weighed almost twenty pounds less when he arrived in Detroit than when he'd set out from Paducah, but he never felt stronger or surer. He got himself a room with a Hungarian family in Delray on his first day and a job on the line at Henry Ford's sprawling River Rouge assembly plant on his second. He was reasonably careful with his money, enough to eventually buy himself a house on Patton Park on the southwest side, on a street with shady elm trees.

Otherwise, he bought books—thousands of them over the years before he finally married. He went to see the Tigers play at Briggs Stadium and he joined an Elks lodge and played poker on Friday nights with his mates from the plant. He sent an annual check to the Detroit Public Library fund. He enjoyed nights out at the clubs

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and saloons along the river separating Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, and nothing troublesome came of it, for he hadn't any need yet to fight in bars.

Twice a year or so, Barlow would have his Buick professionally simonized and he'd drive it down to Paducah to visit family and let everybody get a load of him now. There didn't seem to be any harm in that.

On one of those visits home, right around the year that Japan became the world's leading automaker and a gallon of gasoline was racing toward the dollar mark and the lights began going out all over Detroit, Barlow met the first woman he ever knew in the fullest sense. Her name was Jenny Rose and she very much liked what she saw in Barlow Lundy and his big shiny Buick and what she heard of his life up north where he owned his own home and all. So much so that she decided to become Mrs. Lundy.

Barlow told me about those earliest days the first time I sat with him in his cell.

"You want to get the whole thing down," he said, "then you got to try seeing what I saw the first time we met. What a pair we were! Hell, *you* know, Fred, you've seen her. I'm old enough to be her father. Lord, she was a looker. That's all I did is look, too. I never figured she'd notice.

"But she made the moves, boy, and I was a goner. Maybe if I'd had more experience with women. Hell, just plain experience. I don't know why, I was just never interested. Understand, I'm not one of your fancy men or anything like that. Just undersexed, I guess. Just never cared—until Jenny Rose."

There is no use analyzing the attraction a given man has for a given woman or vice versa. Analysis has to do with logic, which has nothing whatever to do with the business of men and women. Take Old Sexy and me. You have on the one hand a great lady who still wears lace gloves and a hat no matter the weather, and every Sunday goes off to her Episcopal church with all the Republicans. On the other hand, there's her husband, a man of the left in the radical French sense, who bowls and wouldn't be caught dead or alive in a church of any kind. I love her for what I consider to be good reasons, including the fact that she rereads Thomas Hardy every year. Old Sexy says, "You're a jerk, Fred, but you're my kind of jerk." You see what I mean.

Jenny Rose got herself pregnant and wrote a letter to Barlow up in Detroit that melted his heart and aroused him at the very same

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time. When heat runs through a man like that, he goes addlebrained inside of four or five seconds. If fortune happens to be with him, this entirely human reaction will yield him many years of satisfaction. Good fortune and marriages are not made in heaven, though. At best, these things are earthbound.

Prosperity and homely pleasures reigned, but briefly, for Mr. and Mrs. Lundy. Barlow had loads of seniority at the plant, his bride noted, and so there was no reason why they should live in what she called "the bachelor house" in Patton Park when there were so many big, beautiful new homes being built in the suburbs—some with swimming pools out back. And so they moved. In doing so, the majority of Barlow's savings was used up, what with the interior decorator's fee and all the new furnishings and a second car for Jenny Rose. Then their daughter, Leanne, was born and there were more bills to pay.

Barlow no longer played poker on Friday nights. He'd tried having his pals out to his suburban place, but it was nowhere near the same. You can play bridge in the suburbs, or canasta and hearts, but you cannot play poker. Besides, Jenny Rose objected to one of the would-be poker players because, "Barlow, that fella's a nigra and I'm not about to have my neighbors seein' you bring nigras into our home!" This was the sort of thing Barlow had not seen coming when he first laid eyes on the fair Jenny Rose of Paducah.

The job at the Rouge plant had become a daily trial for Barlow long before, but after he vacated the house in Patton Park for a rambling split-level forty-five minutes' driving time from the city on a street called Quakertown Lane that made him wince every time he had to say it, he awoke five mornings a week eager to be off to work.

He began staying later in the city after work and getting home drunker. "I'll tell you something, buster, I'll kill you if you're two-timing me," Jenny Rose warned him. She told him this often—it became a sort of shorthand expression of her general displeasure in a man dumb enough to imagine that a sharp-looking woman half his age was interested in anything he could provide her with beyond a ticket out of another kind of general displeasure. If Barlow felt up to arguing with her, he'd say, "Shut up, you're giving me ideas." And though this nasty and corrosive level of repetitive exchange grew to become at least half the conversational volume in the Lundy household on Quakertown Lane, the letters Jenny Rose wrote to

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family and friends in Paducah told of her boundless happiness upon attaining the great American dream.

And then matters grew quite beyond the control of Barlow T. Lundy and so many others who do not think of time as a property that may only be borrowed. It happened not long after Ronald Reagan came to Detroit to get the Republican nomination for President at Cobo Arena.

The unemployment rate got so bad and the soup kitchens and the free cheese from Washington were picked so clean that Germany sent care packages to the city of Detroit, the "Arsenal of Democracy" that had so helped to defeat Germany in two wars.

Remember?

"Hell, yes," Barlow said. "I'm not forgetting that day any more than I'm going to forget the day they laid me off. With my seniority, too. Well, I wasn't the only long-timer laid off that day.

"I was all washed up for working, at my age. The only thing I knew besides making cars was what I'd read, but I couldn't teach anyplace because I never so much as got a diploma from a high school. But I figured this: I had my unemployment benefits for a year, which wasn't enough but which was something. I had some savings left—I could work off the books at odd jobs, I didn't care what. And if it came to it, I could sell the house and we could move back into the city and live cheaper on the profits. And besides all that, I had only about four years before I started collecting on my Social Security and my Ford pension."

A lot of men in Barlow's situation looked on the bright side like that and a lot of them had wives who worked, for one thing, and who weren't Jenny Rose for another. "You could die and I could collect on the insurance," she began telling him.

So many were in Barlow's situation—and so surprised to be there since they'd always followed the rules and otherwise hewed to the middle-class line—that many took refuge in hearing the roseate views that poured out of Washington with each factory closing, with each farm bankruptcy. The parasites that spring up at such times went to work, this time conducting "success" seminars in hotel ballrooms from coast to coast. Even the likes of Barlow T. Lundy attended and wasted two hundred and fifty dollars on platitudes in a colorful three-ring binder for home study. And even so, Barlow was

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made to feel a failure once the spieler was through and there was noplace to go but home to Jenny Rose.

His unemployment compensation benefits ran out, his savings vanished, and Barlow sold both cars, buying a used VW and hanging onto a bit of profit from the deal. The odd jobs were extremely hard to come by for a man nearing sixty with no skills. Social Security and the pension money were years off.

During the week that President Reagan berated the news media for overblowing the story every time "some farmer out in South Succotash" went under, Barlow knew he would have to sell the house. The only thing worse than Jenny Rose's vociferous opposition was that selling a house in suburban Detroit then was more like giving it away and Barlow received a net gain of less than what he'd put down on the house. And this money soon vanished when Leanne took sick and had to be hospitalized, the hospital demanding cash on the barrelhead, in advance, from anyone who didn't have the decency to be medically insured.

By that time, he'd moved Jenny Rose and Leanne into a large apartment in one of the remaining all-white sections of Detroit. But after falling five months' behind in the rent, the Lundy family was asked to vacate the premises. "That's when I went with cup in hand down to the City-County Building," Barlow said in his cell. "I wouldn't have done it if it was just me, but there was Jenny Rose and Leanne to think of. I *had* to beg."

Begging is what a man like Barlow called welfare.

"Do you have any idea what it means to apply for public assistance?" Barlow asked me.

"Not by direct experience," I said.

"It's the intimate circumstances of your life put on public display, that's what it is. It's sitting in a plastic chair and feeling the sweat run down your back and into your shorts while you're watching somebody who has a job because you don't tot up the numerical meaning of your life in neat little rows on some piece of paper and then telling you what line to stand on for which handout—and then, in my case anyway, having your wife look at you like you're a bum. I tell you, Fred, I'd rather have a short-term inspection any old day."

I'd first met Barlow right about the time he became a ward of the county. The welfare people had found him an apartment on East Grand Boulevard and they'd paid for moving what remained of his belongings into a lower flat of the fourplex house Jenny Rose called "a decrepit old thing smack in the middle of what I'd call Black

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Bottom." There was a bit of bureaucratic objection at first, but the welfare people even paid for moving the scores of boxes into which Barlow had carefully packed the books he couldn't part with. His wife had never read one of them, but she instinctively resented their presence in her house, almost as if they were another woman.

While Jenny Rose stayed home all day with the curtains drawn, refusing to leave the house for fear of being attacked by someone not of her gene pool, Barlow roamed the city in search of the elusive odd jobs that were once central to his hopes of keeping peace with his wife. As Jenny Rose claimed Leanne was sickly, she was kept home from school. A tutor stopped by twice a week, but she was slipping behind fast. Barlow tried reading to her in the evenings, but she preferred television and Jenny Rose chose their reading time to bang around the kitchen as loudly as possible. Finally Barlow gave up.

"I could see my little girl becoming stupid," he said. "I know that sounds hard, but it's the truth. Stupidity makes me sad and I generally avoid stupid people for that reason."

Then a small bit of luck came into Barlow's life with a job mowing lawns for a landscaping company that deployed trucks around the pricier districts of the city and the inner ring of suburbs. Barlow would meet his crew at a garage on Cass Avenue in the mornings, which is how he happened into Busy Betty's and I made his acquaintance. In the afternoons, the truck dropped him off downtown and he walked past the Athens Bar on the way to his East Grand Boulevard flat, which is how it happened that he became part of that scene as well. He was paid off the books, so there was no way the welfare office could know about his extra income. He figured on banking some of it so that he could get a new start on life, old as he was. But it became harder and harder for him to walk on by the Athens Bar at the end of a day, knowing what lay ahead in the bosom of his family.

"I'll tell you what courage is, Fred," he told me. "Courage is not putting a gun to your head. I'll tell you what justice would be, too—" He watched me making notes on my pad. "Are you getting this all down?"

"Yes. You were about to tell me your definition of justice."

"I think justice would be putting the striped-pants boys in Washington who are telling us that things have never been better through the drill at the welfare office. Just the humiliation of that." Barlow brooded. "Oh, hell. Justice is probably irrelevant half the time."

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"At least that often," I said. "If you put the bastards through one misery they'd created, they'd just go off and invent another one for you."

So it seemed. Every time Barlow thought himself past the worst thing he imagined could happen, something else came along that was even more hideous. And soon he numbly accepted his depression along with the sunrise.

One day the welfare office moved a quiet couple out of the lower flat next to the Lundys and moved in a woman who had six children. The woman had different men over every night—or so it seemed to Jenny Rose. Some of the men were impatient with the children, and one of them started visiting regularly. Barlow and Jenny Rose were sometimes awakened by cries and screams from the children on the other side of the wall. Jenny Rose called the police, finally, from a telephone at an all-night market on the corner. Barlow was amazed that she cared so much that she'd leave the house at night to summon help for the children. But that wasn't it. "I'm just not going to lose sleep over the racket them nigra babies is making over there, that's all," she said.

Two cops came quickly, but there wasn't much they could do since the kids dummied up and their mother said everything was fine except for the fact that it was a hot night and the kids were loud and cranky. The boy friend looked like an animal that needed locking up, but cops can't make arrests on appearance. When they left, the boy friend banged on the Lundys' door so hard that a couple of the hinge-screws came loose.

Barlow answered the door and the beast told him, "The po-leece tells me your ol' lady went and called up on me. Anybody over here goes callin' the man on me again gonna be dead, hear? He pulled a gun from his shirt—a big ugly blue-steel thing—and he jabbed it in Barlow's face so hard he left a jagged cut below his left cheekbone. "You dig? Your ol' lady calls out the man once more and I come over here and make her eat my gun!"

The next night, the children were beaten again.

"I don't care about that ape over there," Barlow said, "I'm calling the cops. I can't stand by while those kids are getting walloped and God knows what else."

"What the hell do you care about kids?" Jenny Rose shrieked. "You haven't got any!"

"I haven't got—"

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"Leanne's not yours and it's time you knew it, you loser, you!"

Barlow sat down on a chair, his legs suddenly unsteady. The screaming from next door stopped, but his head hurt like someone had driven a nail into it. "Jenny Rose, I hadn't thought you had any more visciousness in you yet to see."

"What did you think? That I was in love with you?"

"Once, yes."

"You're a dreamin' fool, Barlow Lundy. It's because of all these books around here. It's all you're interested in, your damn books!"

Barlow held his head in his hands and felt the throbbing pass from his temples to his fingers. Then he went to be sick in the bathroom, where he slept on the cool tiles until morning.

I saw him that morning at Busy Betty's and knew he must have had a bad row with Jenny Rose. Later that afternoon at the Athens Bar was when he made the remark about books being more reliable friends than people.

I reminded him of it when we talked in prison.

"Oh, you remember that day," Barlow said. "I could see you knew something terrible was going on inside of me. What you still don't know to this day is what I found when I got home." He lit a Chesterfield and offered me one from his pack. I took it out but I didn't really want it.

"I got home about half past ten that night, bone tired and drained of life, and, I got to admit it, thinking on how I might kill Jenny Rose. The back of the apartment stank of smoke, so I hurried out there—and found out why. Jenny Rose was out in the back yard standing over an incinerator can, burning my books. There were a few left on the kitchen porch but she'd already burned most of them. She'd been at the job most of the day."

She'd screamed at him. "You're nothing but a no-account man on welfare! A beggar! What's a beggar need with books, anyhow?"

Barlow sat down on the porch step and bawled like a baby. All he could think of was a fugitive line from Shakespeare—"When beggars die, there are no comic scenes." To keep from going insane, to keep from killing his wife with his own two hands, he tried to remember which play the line was from. He couldn't.

As he got up and started back inside the house, he saw Leanne in the shadows of the kitchen and that she was crying for the man who was her father no matter what the circumstances of her birth.

He went to the parlor, and sat in the dark for hours. Well after midnight, Leanne crept in from her bedroom and slept on the chair

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next to him. Then, from the other side of the wall, came the sound of the children screaming.

Barlow woke Leanne and took her with him to the corner market to make the call to the police, knowing full well the consequences to Jenny Rose once the police had made their perfunctory appearance and gone, leaving behind the enraged brute with the blue-steel gun and his promise of murder to keep. Then they walked the streets until dawn, neither of them saying a word.

Jenny Rose's body was taken to the Wayne County Morgue for an autopsy. The boy friend from next door was apprehended within hours and the cops were looking for Barlow, too, when he walked into the precinct house with Leanne and told detectives the whole story.

"I set her up. I knew the ape next door would spare me the job of doing it myself. If Jenny Rose were here, I guess she'd say I wasn't much of a man about it. Well, I suppose she'd be right about that. If she was completely right about us, though, she'd see she wasn't much of a woman."

Barlow's fate is still to be decided. He'll be tried for either involuntary manslaughter or accessory to murder, once the prosecutor makes up his mind. In any case, he says he'll plead guilty because that's the way he honestly feels.

He laughed as he sat on the bunk in his cell and considered his future. "Here's what they'll say about Barlow T. Lundy, one of the millions of nobodies behind bars: 'He came, he went, and who cares?' "

I cared, I told him.

"So what does that mean for me?" he asked.

I had no ready answer. In all my years of crime writing, I'd never quite found the words to settle the natural question. I'd been asked it many times. I'd asked it of myself many more times.

Finally I said to Barlow, "I guess I've escaped your grief in order to describe it."

It was the best I could offer.

"Yeah, well, we'll just see about your story, Fred. We'll see if you describe it right or not."

"There isn't anything I'm likely to say that's going to get you entirely off the hook," I told him. "But I'm going to try to write it so no jury will ever hang you."

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A *NEW* Miss Unwin story by

H. R. F. KEATING

A charming sketch about children and tutors in Victoria's time by H. R. F. Keating, recently referred to in Publishers Weekly *as "still the consummate observer of human nature." Mr. Keating has an unusual knack with children and two of his stories will appear in an upcoming collection of mystery stories for young adults,* Tales from Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, *edited by Eleanor Sullivan and Cynthia Manson and published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich . . .*

A COMMON ERROR

by H. R. F. KEATING

None of them are.

Miss Unwin was to wonder later whether there would have been any trouble at all if she had not felt, as governess to the Hon. Julia Throckmorton, aged eight, that she should rebuke that particular grammatical solecism. But a rebuke was her duty. She owed as much to Julia's parents, her employers. So she hardened her heart a little and made Julia write out "in your best hand" twenty times: *It is a common error to follow 'none,' a contraction of 'not one,' by a verb in the plural.* "And put today's date at the top of the sheet as I have taught you," she added. "Friday, July the 18th, 1876."

"Yes, Miss Unwin," said Julia, always in the end obedient.

It was that evening that the trouble arising from this little grammar lesson began. The three children of the house, Julia and her two older brothers, Frederick and George, were each day summoned to the drawing-room when their father, Sir Magnus, had returned from his City office. Miss Unwin was expected then to show Sir Magnus and the children's mother what progress Julia had made,

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and Mr. Haughton, the boys' tutor, was expected to demonstrate the paces of his young charges.

The occasion was generally something of an ordeal. Lady Throckmorton was always too inclined to praise the children for the least endeavor, and would have lavishly rewarded them had her husband allowed her. Sir Magnus, on the other hand, varied between extreme severity and extreme indulgence, according to his whim of the moment.

Just at this period it was the two boys who were the objects of his displeasure. A month earlier their pocket money had been abruptly and indefinitely cancelled when Frederick, the elder, had been thought impertinent and George, his junior by a year, had rashly spoken up for him. So Julia was the one now who could do no wrong.

Mr. Haughton, thin-cheeked, anxious, and stiffly correct, had posed to Frederick a question on geology. Miss Unwin guessed that the boy had been well coached in its simple answer. But unfortunately he happened to phrase that answer as "None of them are." And at once little Julia called out, "Common error, common error! You have to say *none is*. Don't you know that?" For this she was rewarded with an immediate golden sovereign from her father's purse while Frederick, and the unoffending George, received thunderous frowns.

Miss Unwin made a private note to tell Julia that she should not mock her brothers, especially in their father's presence. A yet more private thought, that it was extremely foolish of Sir Magnus to give the child so large a sum no matter what she might have done to deserve reward, she resolved not to speak aloud so long as she was in Sir Magnus's employ.

All might yet have been well, however, but between that evening and breakfast next morning Julia's golden gift disappeared.

Miss Unwin had wanted to look after it for her, but Julia, with loud entreaties, had begged to put it in her keepsake box. "Please. Please, Miss Unwin. So my seashells from Bournemouth and my piece of bluejohn stone from our visit to Derbyshire and my other things can see it. Please, Miss Unwin." And, thinking that the coin would probably be just as safe there as anywhere, Miss Unwin had agreed.

But safe the golden sovereign was not. Looking in the keepsake box before her lessons began, Julia had found the coin gone. And, worse than that, it soon emerged that, because the nursery-maid had become unwell and had not been about at the time the sovereign

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had been consigned to its place beside the seashells and the bluejohn stone, the only persons who had heard Julia's loud entreaties the evening before and who thus knew where the gold coin was had been the two boys and Mr. Haughton.

"It is hardly likely, Miss Unwin," Mr. Haughton said when she had explained the situation to him, "that I should abstract the coin from the child's box."

And Miss Unwin, though she had never felt much sympathy for the tutor's rigid views, had to agree that it was indeed altogether unlikely that a person of his character and antecedents, who was well remunerated, too, would stoop to robbing a child.

"So it is clear, then," Mr. Haughton continued, "where we shall have to look."

"I am afraid that it is."

"My pupils. How often in our Latin lessons have I expatiated upon the difference between *meum* and *tuum*—between *mine* and *thine*, Miss Unwin—and now this."

Miss Unwin, who had taught herself not a little Latin, passed over Mr. Haughton's masculine belief in her ignorance and went straight to the point.

"Yes, Mr. Haughton," she said, "the thief must be one of your pupils, alas. But the question that matters surely is: which?"

"Which, Miss Unwin?"

"Yes, Mr Haughton—are we to put the blame on Frederick? Or onto George?"

"Yes. Yes, I had not considered that aspect of the matter. I suppose—I suppose that they cannot both have joined in this wicked act?"

"Think how they feel about each other, Mr. Haughton. You yourself the other day expressed astonishment that George had come to his brother's defense when that sad incident took place with their father and they forfeited their pocket money."

Mr. Haughton considered.

"Yes. Yes, it is true that there is little love lost between the two of them. A healthy rivalry. I have somewhat encouraged it, though not with any great success so far as their school work is concerned."

"No, sir," said Miss Unwin, who had other views. "But we are left with our dilemma. Frederick or George?"

"Well, it may appear a dilemma to you, Miss Unwin, but I do not think I shall find it an insuperable problem. A sharp interrogation

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of each boy separately, and I flatter myself that I shall arrive at the truth."

But he didn't.

When Miss Unwin drew him aside he was constrained to admit failure.

"They are obstinate—obstinate to a degree," he said. "I do not know which is the worse. Frederick is mulishly silent. George is loud in his denials—somewhat pert indeed. I have had to award an imposition. Two hundred lines of Virgil."

"But you are no nearer knowing which of them has Julia's sovereign?"

"No. No, I am not. However, a thorough search of their belongings should settle the matter. Perhaps you might assist."

Miss Unwin did not much like the idea of prying into the boys' affairs. But she thought she owed it to Mr. Haughton to witness his thoroughness at least, and duly presented herself first in Frederick's room, then in George's.

But the search, which was indeed thorough, revealed nothing.

"Unless the thief has thrown the coin out of the window, and I find that hard to believe," Mr. Haughton said, "I must confess he has baffled me."

He drew himself up then, stiff-necked above his stiff collar. "But he, whichever one of them it is, will not defeat me in the end," he said. "I cannot allow it."

"But what are you going to do about it?" Miss Unwin asked.

"Why, since neither will own to the act, both must suffer punishment. I shall so inform their father this evening."

"Oh, no, Mr. Haughton, no."

"No? And pray why not?"

"Oh, Mr. Haughton, you know Sir Magnus. He has already acted with such severity over the incident of Frederick's impudence. Think what he might do if this should come to his ears. And one of the victims is bound in the circumstances to be treated quite unjustly."

"Then what would you have me do, Miss Unwin? Admit that I have been bested by a boy of twelve?"

"Or by a boy of eleven?" Miss Unwin answered. "Is it twelve-year-old Frederick or eleven-year-old George who truly deserves punishment? That is the crux of the matter, sir."

"I dare say. I dare say. But I cannot simply leave it at that."

"Perhaps you can, sir."

"No."

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"Perhaps it would be wise to leave it. For a little."

"But— Ah, you think that the culprit may give himself away with time?"

"It might be the most expedient answer."

"Yes. Yes, I think you can rely on me, Miss Unwin, to keep a pretty sharp eye on our two malefactors. Yes, a pretty sharp eye."

"On our one malefactor, Mr. Haughton. On which ever of them proves to be the one."

"Well, yes. Yes, I suppose so."

So some days went by. Miss Unwin had a quiet talk with Julia and impressed upon her the importance of saying nothing of the disappearance of her sovereign in front of either her frequently indulgent mother or more particularly in front of iron-severe Sir Magnus. And before a week had passed, Mr. Haughton signaled urgently to her one afternoon that he wanted to hold a conference.

Miss Unwin saw to it that Julia had a piece of stitching to work at and then left the nursery.

Outside, she saw in Mr. Haughton's pale eyes the blaze of triumph.

"George," he said as soon as she was within whispering earshot. "Yes, I thought a waiting game would pay. It is George, Miss Unwin. Not ten minutes ago I found, concealed beneath his bed, the full-rigged model yacht which he had long set his heart on possessing. The boy had no other source of funds for the purchase. The culprit stands revealed."

He turned and marched into the schoolroom, where his charges were busy learning the variations of the fifth declension of Latin nouns. Or supposedly were so. When Miss Unwin followed the tutor into the room she thought their books were not exactly at the angles they should be if they were being studied with proper earnestness.

But there was no time to think about that. Mr. Haughton had descended on George with the full majesty of his ire.

"Now, sir, you have been caught in flagrante delicto. What funds did you have with which to purchase that model ship now beneath your bed? Answer me that, you thief of your own sister's substance."

But now it was the turn of George, generally the more open of the two, to resort to sullen denials. Nothing Mr. Haughton could say—not his logic, not his threats, not his anger—could produce the shadow of a confession.

Eventually Miss Unwin found herself going so far as to attempt to help the boy out of his situation by suggesting plausible ways in

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which he might have obtained money for his toy yacht without resorting to theft. "Did you have savings we knew nothing about, George?" she asked.

"You know I didn't."

"Well, did you promise the shopman you would pay him later? It would be wrong of you, but by no means so wrong as stealing."

"Do you think the shop would trust me?"

"Well, George, surely it must be one of those alternatives?"

"None of them are right," George said in a ferocious mutter.

And it was her instantly suppressed desire to correct that common error of grammar that made Miss Unwin see suddenly that, despite the evidence against him, George was telling the truth. And if he was telling the truth, of course, Frederick, sitting looking on so placidly, must be the real thief. She had seen in that instant just why he had taken the sovereign from his sister's keepsake box.

She turned to the boy, ignoring entirely Mr. Haughton looming over George in his wrath. "Frederick," she said, "you took that sovereign to spite Julia, did you not? She had laughed at you for a mistake in grammar in front of your father and had been rewarded for it. You took the sovereign to pay her back and then simply got rid of it some way."

Frederick did not need to answer in words. His darkly blushing cheeks were confession enough.

When it had been arranged that, once his pocket money had been restored, Frederick would pay back the stolen sum and that in further retribution he would stay confined to his room on bread and water for a proper period, Miss Unwin had a word more for the tutor.

"No doubt Lady Throckmorton, who is perhaps too soft-hearted on occasion, secretly funded George's purchase," she said. "And no doubt, too, he gallantly refused to betray her. But, as to Frederick, there are many reasons why people make away with other people's property and one shouldn't think desire for gain is always the cause. That is something of a common error, is it not?"

"Q"

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a distinguished reprint by

MARGERY FINN BROWN

A story that excited us over fifteen years ago and excites us just as much now, a story we doubt will ever fail to excite, is Margery Finn Brown's "In the Forests of Riga the Beasts Are Very Wild Indeed." It first appeared in the July 1970 issue of McCall's *and won the Edgar from the Mystery Writers of America for best mystery short story published that year. The MWA committee that voted it this honor was criticized by some who felt the story was not sufficiently in the genre to justify its nomination. We say that committee's decision was excellent and want to share this stunning story with those of you who never read it.* McCall's *fiction editor, Helen DelMonte, recently told us the story has received more favorable comment from readers than any other published in the magazine during her tenure . . .*

IN THE FORESTS OF RIGA THE BEASTS ARE VERY WILD INDEED

by MARGERY FINN BROWN

Take it on faith, make it a handclasp between friends: I am an ordinary woman, unmemorable in looks and endeavors. No one ever followed me home. I never won a prize in a raffle. Once, when I was riding by an open window on a bus, an apple core flew in and gave me a black eye. Later I married, had four children, lived in twenty houses around the earth, gave parties, seamed curtains,

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dreamed, encountered God, respected beauty, and one Thanksgiving, with my left hand in a splint, cooked dinner for thirty people.

My life has been "usual, simple, and therefore most terrible." Tolstoi? Dostoevski? No matter. What does matter is that since a massive cardiac eight months ago I am obliged to take quarazine. You say it bluntly: the zine rhymes with *"cousine,"* a word that comes to mind because *Rosenkavalier* is spinning on the record player down the hall and Ochs is importuning *"ma cousine."* Every note, every hemidemisemiquaver is etched on crystal. None of it matters.

Until eight months ago, music was an integral part of my life. So were books, as necessary to me as breathing in and breathing out. Now when I look at the rows and rows lining the hall—great books, mediocre books, poets, spellbinders, historians, windbags, *flâneurs*, friends—I feel a terrible sadness. This morning I tried again to read Yeats. "What shall I do for beauty, now my old bawd is dead?" The words march valiantly across the page. The meaning sputters through my head like a damp firecracker.

So, you may say. So you cannot enjoy music or read Yeats. So you walk with an obscene white cane and your dreams are stained with the echoes of cigarette smoke. So what? Bear with me, please. We have just left the runway, seat belts are still fastened. To get back to quarazine, its basic ingredient is warfarin. (Warfarin, oddly enough, is the basic ingredient in rat killers.) Quarazine is an anti-coagulant. The thinner the mixture, the easier it is for blood to pump up and down the arteries, in and out of the main firehouse, thus lessening the possibility of a "recurring incident," to quote Doctor Chiclets.

How much quarazine do I take? It varies. Every Wednesday I go to Chiclets' office on Sutter Street and have a blood test, to determine the coagulating rate. Every Thursday between one and three, Miss—an old miss—Franklin telephones and says, "Mrs. George Manning? Katherine Manning? Your new dosage until next Wednesday is eleven. Repeat after me, Mrs. Manning, eleven milligrams." Eleven, I say. Eleven, incise it on your heart. Eleven, scrawl it on the Cinderella wallpaper in the bathroom.

I keep quarazine in two phials inside the mirrored medicine chest. The lavender pills are two milligrams. The peach are five milligrams. Eleven is two peach and one half lavender. After I take the quarazine, I close the medicine chest, regard the face in the mirror, and speak to it. I say, "You in there, old tomodachi, you with the

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sags and the bags and the puffy saucers under the eyes, you have taken your quarazine today. Do not repeat. Repeat, do not repeat today."

Why the ritual?

Thin blood can drown you. It drowns rats.

Stretched out on the mauve-taffeta bed in my room, I am waiting now for Miss Franklin to call. The headboard is a tortured rococo from Venice. The Boulle chest I paid too much for at Butterfield's auction. On top of it are a lamp made from a Waterford candlestick, a princess telephone, and a book bandaged in blue. Yeats.

Yesterday, Wednesday, I went to the doctor's. I am not obliged to remember what happened yesterday. I am not a stone, a lizard. I have free will. I will think how beautiful the light was last night at dusk. The light made Hiroshige blue stripes on the water. I said, "Have you ever seen a more beautiful sunset? My head feels strange."

Before I closed my eyes, I saw my husband and my son exchange a look of utter boredom. (They are not mean, mind you, they don't know how to be mean.) I'm bored with me, too. There is not a damn thing I can do about it while I'm taking quarazine. It has dissolved the inside of my head. There's a forest in there now. It's thick and black. Nothing stirs in the forest. The sun never shines. The growth still grows, chokes. You know the painting by Rousseau, the one where the lion is eating the leopard headfirst? Rousseau's trees and leaves and branches are shiny-green enamel. Ungloss them. Smudge them black, the lion has finished eating the leopard, the stillness is eternal—that is my head.

I am ashamed to tell anyone about the forest. It *is*. I am positive of it. The knowledge comes straight from the "zero bone." Emily Dickinson? Whitman? The zero bone tells you when you have had an encounter. A glance can be an encounter, or a word, a body's spontaneous gesture, the shape of a cloud, autumn leaves burning. You never forget encounters, nor do you search for them; they leap at you unannounced. An encounter can be like a sunburn. Off peels a layer of skin, exposing a tender red hurting surface that toughens gradually. An encounter can mystify, enlighten, or terrorize. What it can never be is superficial.

Is it true for you? Has your life, like mine, bulged with people? Yet I have had few encounters, fewer still related to joy. A blistering night in Santiago, so long ago air-conditioning had not been in-

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vented. My back burned with prickly heat. The woman in the next labor room screamed with every breath. *"Madre de Dios, Madre de Dios!"* My doctor did not believe in anesthesia, so my first child was born *au naturel*. It took two days.

When I first saw Jamey, he was upside down, a tiny fish, shimmering under a waxy overcoat. The doctor said, "Mrs. Manning, you have been an excellent patient. I am going to give you a whiff of something before I sew you up." I told him to keep it. I didn't want to miss one second of this encounter—an upside-down baby with a pirate's grin and with an impudent gleam in his eye.

Another hot night, years later in Rome, an Embassy reception for R., a famous soprano. I had heard her sing, but never met her before. She wore a chrome-yellow Balenciaga, hoops of perspiration under her arms. Unlike her arrogantly assured stage stance, she looked shy, a please-like-me little girl at her first party. Everyone in Rome had turned out to meet her. Directly ahead of us in line was the British commercial attaché. I remember his guardsman's moustache and rabbity teeth. "In the foddist of Rrrrriga," he said, apropos of something, "the beasts are very wild indeed."

When I was introduced to R., I said good-evening. She looked me right in the eye. "Pray for me," she said. Startled, I said lightly, "Any special time?" There was no answering smile. "All the time," she said, "starting now."

Warrenton, Virginia. A shabby farmhouse with splintery floors and tribes of field mice. I lived there with the children for a year until we could join my husband in Djakarta.

A year is twelve months. He did not write for nine weeks. I found I could function without sleep for two days. Third night, my room would swarm with people, and the people would speak, and my own voice answered, shrilling through the empty dark. One night, I encountered God. He said four words. Did I imagine him? Did He imagine me? The words still live.

So fly a pennant for Warrenton, mute the strings in Djakarta. A mammoth blood-red moon, a hunter's moon, my husband said. The bamboo swayed, swivel-hipped under the window. I cannot even remember the girl's name. All that comes back is the smell of DDT. (Do you know about the parrot Paderewski trained to perch on the piano and say, "You're the greatest, you're the greatest, the greatest"?)

After that night in Djakarta with the hunter's moon, George would

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never again imitate Paderewski's parrot, and I would never again be his hatchet woman, chopping down his adversaries, making his life free of rent or wrinkle. Which makes neither of us superior. It merely removed one of the hundred reasons we took each other in marriage and bedhood. Vigor, in any event, is a marginal virtue in a woman. If I could create a new facade, I would be lazy and lovely and amiable as the trumpet vine lacing the house where I was born.

Durham, New Hampshire, a brown shingled house rimmed in Gothic-green. Emmett, my step-brother—his father married my mother—gets violent every ten years or so. He would never hurt me. We were close as twins. I taught him to ride a bicycle. He paid for my first permanent, caddying. When Father died, the house went to Emmett. I came home to Durham to help him dispose of the incunabula of eighty-some years.

The two of us alone, the night after the funeral, walking down the cellar steps.

"You know how Father hated taxes," Emmett said. "One night last winter he hauled me out of bed and made me bury a wad of treasury notes in the wine cellar. Then I had to cement over it. You're coming with me while I dig it up. I need a witness."

The back of my neck was ice. I kept walking down the steps, too frightened to turn back. "We will have to find Father's ax, won't we, Kate? You wouldn't know where he kept it, would you? I stayed in Durham. I took his crap year in, year out, while you roamed here, there, everywhere . . . We're going to find that ax if it takes all night, aren't we, Kate?"

Encounters remembered. Deeds done. Words said. Tracer bullets lobbing over the forest. I was named Kate for my Irish grandmother. She dyed her hair with tea leaves and thumped the floor with her blackthorn if the service was poor or people didn't do as she liked. Stay fierce, she used to say, stay lean, Kate, take no man's guff.

Lardy, defanged, I exist in a mauve bedroom, waiting for the phone to ring. If only I didn't have to take quarazine. "If only" is a greased pole to nowhere. All there is is what is. Me. This minute. My left hand. How can I describe my left hand? It has gnawed cuticles, a wedding ring grown too large, grave freckles, wormy blue veins, a medic-alert bracelet on the wrist, a scar on the forefinger where I broke a dish of pickled beets twenty years ago. The framework consists of five fan-shape bones covered with skin the color of cheese. The bones are cut into five uneven strips, each strip ending in an

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oval cellophane window. Once, looking down from the loft of a stable, I thought, That's not a horse's back, that's a cello.

Listen: this is quarazine. I am frightened.

Listen: my mother-in-law's lobster claw clamped around your wrist so you would not leave before she finished one of her interminably long, pointless stories. My mother-in-law, a muscled, all-dark-meat woman. Squeaky dentures, lipstick bleeding into the pleats around her mouth, nicotined fingers worked to the bone. She adored George, "my only child, my son, the diplomat." George was ashamed of her. "God's sake, Ma, if you have to label me, just say I'm with the State Department."

Every summer she visited us. The pipes rumbled as she bathed, five o'clock in the morning. The ironing was all finished when we returned at night from a party. No, she wouldn't come, no, she wouldn't "fit in. Besides, I'm allergic to Mexican food." That, George said, was a lot of bushwa. So she went with us to the Troups' in Mexico City. She ate tortillas and drank sangria until she was sick, *o, o, con fuoco* all over the Troups' bathroom.

In the middle of the night, I awoke. The guest-room door had blown open and I heard her trying quietly to light a match. (Lord, I thought, someday I'll be old and visiting one of my married children, and they'll be whispering in bed, "When is she going home? Lord, I can't stand this much longer.") It wasn't love or pity that impelled me to walk into the guest room. I needed a talisman to ward off my own future. "Mrs. Manning," I said, "can I get you something?" A phlegmy, raspy laugh. Out came the lobster claw. "Listen," she said, "I know I'm a damn nuisance, but I can't seem to help it." The next morning at breakfast, she was the same, lipstick seeping, calliope laugh, trying to woo her son, her only child, the diplomat. The same and never the same again. Martin Buber would say the I-It relationship had changed to an I-Thou. Alan Watts would say the she-ness of she encountered the me-ness of me.

What do I say?

I say our journey is almost over, we're coming in over the airport, the landing gear is down and locked. Yesterday I went to the doctor's. I call him Chiclets for short and for spite. Why do I despise him? Fear, what else? He has wind-colored eyes, furry knuckles, and when he touches you his hands are deft and contemptuous, like a butcher handling meat. Why should a man so lacking in empathy become a doctor? Geld, more than likely, and status. God is his peer group. Pay homage to the doctor, oh yes, but forget the frank, insult, and

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mirth. His voice starts out in the lower abdomen, big and scornful, but after winding through fatty detours and truck routes comes out of his rosebud mouth minuscule, unvaliant, ridiculous somehow, like a tricycle batting it down the freeway.

"Ah, you have not started smoking again," he says, blowing smoke in my face. "Ah, you have courage." (Not enough, I wanted to say, not enough, you two-bit twot. I heard you browbeating that incontinent old wreck in the hospital.) "As I have said before, Mrs. Manning, quarazine is a powerful drug and your coagulating rate is at best erratic, but never in all my experience have I encountered a reaction such as yours." (Come off it, summer camper, sophomore in life, they should send you back to the worm, you're a waste of love and lust.) "My technician is getting married today. I will draw your blood, make a fist please." (How childish I was when my blood spurted on his shirt, so childishly delighted I found the nerve to ask that bitter-bile question.)

"Mrs. Manning, you may have to take quarazine all your life. It is more than likely, I should say, so you must resign yourself to that probability."

Resigned?

I ride down the elevator of the Medical Arts Building. The blind pencil vendor recognizes my footsteps. "Your feet tapping weak today, Mrs. Manning," I say, "No, Mr. Holliday, I'm fine. How's the world treating you?" "Terrible. No sense knocking it, is they?" Resigned I can never be. Dead before I am docile. My neck aches from holding up the forest. I am dispersed. I have nightmares. I am frightened. Things frighten and attract me simultaneously.

The traffic island in front of me. I must cross the street to get a cab home. In the middle of the intersection there's a pedestrian haven, a small raised triangle. When I'm lucky I make it across the street without having the light change. Today I cannot walk fast enough. I stand on the traffic island, watching the cars arrel-bassing by, the trucks puffing smug and smog, wild-eyed buses so close they eat the breath from my mouth. I look down on my black alligator shoe. Put your little foot right there. Silly jingle. Right there, one inch, and it will all be over, Kate.

Stop pushing. Whoever is pushing me in the small of the back, *stop it.* No need to turn around. I know I am alone on the traffic island. I have no assurance that it would be quick, final, or painless. I could live all chewed up, fresh from the gristmill. Wouldn't that be loverly? When the light changes, I limp across to the cab stand.

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Be patient, patient. Be valid, invalid. Chop down the forest, but do not make me wait.

I've been waiting all afternoon. Look at the time, ten after three. The neighborhood children are coming home from school, sweater arms lashed around their waists. Elijah, a dilapidated coach dog, crawls out from under the hedge and gives a halfhearted hello.

"Hi, Elijah." I recognize the voice. The new little girl. Can't be five, wears mesh panty hose, and has the whole block in thrall. "Lijah, you know what?"

I pick up the phone before the second ring. It *is* Miss Franklin. I listen, repeat the new dosage, say thank you, hang up.

Lijah, you know what? I have to start taking twenty-two milligrams. *Madre de Dios.* In the hospital it was four milligrams. Then six, nine, eleven, fourteen, fifteen, eighteen. Twenty-two. I'll dissolve. I'll be in fragments.

Leaning on the white tree-stump cane, I walk into the bathroom. The wallpaper I've been meaning to change for years. It cloys—Cinderellas in hoopskirts stepping out of pumpkin coaches. I open the mirrored chest. Twenty-two. That's six peach. Six times five is twenty. One lavender is two. Twenty and two make twenty-two. I fill a cup from the dispenser with water. The pills go down smoothly. I close the medicine chest. Look, I say to the mirror, look, old friend, you with the sags and the bags, you've taken your quarazine today, so do not repeat. Repeat, do not repeat.

I say it.

There is no face in the mirror.

I can see the collar of a faded-blue robe. I can see a corded neck. Above the neck? Nothing. Air. Where the face should be, a square of Cinderella wallpaper.

An optical illusion?

I turn on the light switch. I can hear that humming prelude fluorescent lights always make. I can hear the last trio from *Rosenkavalier* wisping down the hall. My tongue is wet. We have nice water, it's tart and tastes of fresh mermaids. The porcelain sink feels like a porcelain sink—cold, and eternal.

Alles in ordnung.

I look again in the mirror. The robe, the neck, the air, the wallpaper. I lean over, shaking. I grip my arms tight around my stomach. My heart roars like surf in my ears. Quarazine turned my head into a forest, now it has dissolved my face. Persona means mask. It melted

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my personal mask. The head, then the face, what comes next? The heart? The zero bone that registers encounters, that labels true feelings and looks ahead and wonders. How will I get through the rest of my days?

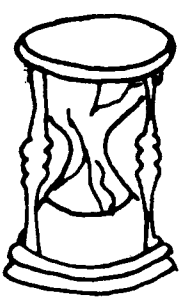
The house is cold. I should turn up the thermostat. Feeling the pull of the rug under my slippers, I back into my bedroom, my little mauve vegetable bin. When feelings go, I'll be a vegetable. Carrots, broccoli, o garland me with parsley. The worst has happened. I encountered me. There was no one there.

Memory nags, pulls on my sleeve. A ravenously rough trip to the Aran Islands, all of us strangers, so sopped by the rain we clung together in the snuggery while cows groaned and thudded in the hold. The Guinness flowed like buttermilk. A little runty Dubliner with a tweed cap and yardarm jaw apologized the first time the ship lurched and a wave of Guinness slipped from his glass into my lap. More lurches, more Guinness. There was noplace to move to, nor did I show any sign of dismay. Each time his apology was curter, less gracious, till in a fit of exasperation he growled, "Madame, ye've got to adjist to the whims of nature."

So I must. Nature never rejoices, mourns, never applauds, never condemns. Nature continues. I haven't the energy to cry. I sigh instead, a breathy sigh that nudges the walls like an airy puffball. Somehow it helps, when you are alone and no one can hear you, to sigh deeply, to say, "O dear. Dear me."

Dear me?

Dear nobody.



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a *NEW* John Jericho story by

HUGH PENTECOST

Bowers opened his eyes and Jericho saw tears there. "I know of a multimillion-dollar drug deal that's about to come off. I thought I could break Grasso when it came about, but he got wind of me somehow and Shelley disappeared. If I go after her, or you go after her, or the cops go after her, she's dead, and I can't prove a thing."

Was there a way in which the odds could be a little more in favor of Shelley? Shortly after leaving a shattered Ben Bowers, Jericho thought there might be. It was a way probably no one else on earth would have dreamed up—a unique, totally John Jericho way . . .

JERICHO'S WAY

by HUGH PENTECOST

"You're something of a hero to most of the people in this part of town, Mr. Jericho," the old man said.

"No man is ever a hero to everyone on the block." Jericho was a red-bearded giant of a man, looking more like an ancient Viking warrior than an artist whose paintings were in art museums and private collections all over the world. "Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross, not a hero to the Roman rulers of the time. Abraham Lincoln was shot to death in Ford's Theater in Washington, not a hero to John Wilkes Booth and other Confederate sympathizers. Fight for a cause, Mr. Perotti, and you're a hero to one side and a villain to the other."

"Anyway, I feel I can trust you," old man Perotti said.

"Would a cup of coffee make it easier for you to talk?" Jericho

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asked. They were in Jericho's studio apartment on Jefferson Mews in New York's Greenwich Village area. More than a decade ago Jericho had settled there after his personal crusade against terrorism had involved him in waterfront violence in the area. Others besides Perotti thought of Jericho as a white knight who had rescued them from corrupt violence.

The old man accepted a mug of coffee with a grateful smile. "It's about my granddaughter," he said.

"Shelley?" Jericho asked. He knew most of the young people in the area by their first names.

Perotti nodded.

"She's been missing for four days." The corners of his mouth twitched slightly.

"And you don't know where she could be?"

"I don't know, her parents don't know, and her boy friend doesn't know," Perotti said. "She just didn't come home or go to Ben Bower's apartment after work on Monday."

"Ben is her boy friend?"

"I guess you could call him that," Perotti said.

"He's a newspaper reporter, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"He has no idea where she is?"

"He says she told him she was going away for a few days on some kind of family business."

"And?"

"There is no such business. There is no family she'd go out of the city to see."

"But she told Bowers that?"

"He says she told him that," Perotti said.

"Do you have reason not to believe him?"

The old man tugged at the tobacco-stained tip of his white moustache. "There are ugly things that can happen between young couples. "Shelley could be pregnant—she might have gone somewhere to have the child aborted. Bowers would play it cool, of course. But if Shelley had to go away for a reason like that, she'd have invented a story for her parents, wouldn't she?"

"I'd say so. You think Bowers knows the truth but isn't talking?" Jericho asked.

"What I have to tell you—what I want to tell you—must be a secret between us, Mr. Jericho."

"If you say so."

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"Shelley told it to me in confidence—because she thought it would please me."

"Try me on it," Jericho said.

"Shelley came to see me. She's been very good about staying in touch with her grandfather. She told me Ben was working on a story that would blow Mike Grasso and his mob out of the water. She knew that would please me because it was Mike Grasso and his goons who ran me out of business fifteen years ago. When I went to Ben to ask him if he knew where Shelley was, I told him this. He froze up tight, like a block of ice we used to put in my mother's icebox."

"He was angry because Shelley told you what he was working on?"

"More like he was terrified," Perotti said. "It occurred to me that Grasso might have snatched Shelley and was holding her to keep Ben from going on with his investigation and printing the story."

"Did you suggest this to Bowers?"

"Yes. He laughed at me. But he wasn't laughing, if you know what I mean. It was almost like admitting I'd guessed right."

"You could go to the police."

"And if Ben isn't ready to nail Grasso, Shelley's body could wind up floating in the harbor," Perotti said. "That's why I came to you, Mr. Jericho. You're famous for knowing how to deal with men like Grasso."

Terror, Jericho thought, is the number-one game from South Africa, to Lebanon, to India, and right around the globe to Greenwich Village. One of the major moves in this sinister game is the taking of innocent people hostage to make a stubborn enemy give up some advantage. In the case of Shelley Perotti, if her grandfather was right, she was being held to persuade her young man to bury a story he'd unearthed that could damage Mike Grasso, the head man of a local crime family. It is easier for the average American to believe that this kind of thing can happen in Johannesburg or Beirut than in New York, but from bitter experience Jericho knew it could happen just around the corner as readily as it could thousands of miles away.

After Perotti had left him, Jericho looked up Ben Bowers' number in the phonebook and called him. There was no answer. When he called the newspaper where Bowers worked, he was told Bowers was out on an assignment. It was after eight o'clock that night when

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Jericho walked down the Mews and east toward the brownstone where Bowers had an apartment. "Terrified," Perotti had said. Maybe Bowers wouldn't be answering his phone. Jericho tried the button by the front-door nameplate. A voice came over the intercom system.

"Yes?"

"Bowers? This is John Jericho. I'd like to talk to you."

"I'm sorry, I'm busy."

"Vince Perotti has just been to see me, Ben."

There was a moment of silence and then Bowers, sounding suddenly strained, said, "Come on up," and the front door-lock clicked. Jericho entered and climbed the semi-dark stairway to the second floor, where Ben Bowers was waiting by the open door of his apartment.

"I am busy, Mr. Jericho," Bowers said. He was blond and blue-eyed and looked, Jericho thought, just about as exhausted as a man can be and still stand on his feet.

"Vince Perotti came to see me about Shelley," Jericho repeated.

A bitter smile twisted the young man's lips. "It's ironic, isn't it, that Vince should go to you for help?"

"Then he's right about Shelley?"

"You should know that as well as anybody," Bowers said. "Just deliver your message and leave me alone. I'm doing what I was told to do—nothing! Is there something more?"

"We don't seem to be on the same wave length," Jericho said.

"I don't suppose I should be surprised that Grasso would pick you for his messenger boy. Local Mr. Wonderful—beyond suspicion."

"I came here to help Vince Perotti if I could," Jericho said. "I'm not carrying any message from Mike Grasso. I don't know the man, except by reputation—a reputation that smells bad."

"Some 'don't know,' " Bowers said. "That mural you painted on the wall behind Grasso's bar in The Boat House—the great John Jericho doesn't paint something like that for anyone but a friend." The Boat House was a restaurant and nightclub owned and operated by Mike Grasso at the opposite end of Jefferson Mews from Jericho's apartment.

"Maybe you're too young to remember the history of that painting," Jericho said. "It was painted there for someone else—Tim Sullivan, who was the original owner. Tim and I were involved in the waterfront violence of fifteen years ago. I painted that mural for Tim to commemorate a victory. When Grasso took over The Boat

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House, there wasn't anything I could do. I was persuaded just to forget it. Tim Sullivan was a close friend. Grasso's nothing to me—unless he's holding Shelley hostage. If he is, tell me. Maybe I can help."

Ben Bowers rubbed his bloodshot eyes painfully. "There's no way you can help, Mr. Jericho," he said in a broken voice. "I'm sorry if I had you wrong. The mural made me think you were friendly with Grasso. I grew up on stories about Tim Sullivan and the waterfront wars. Grasso forced Tim Sullivan out of business just the way he forced Shelley's grandfather to throw in the towel—he's stolen this whole section of the city from the people who once owned it."

"Shelley? Has he got her?" Jericho asked.

Bowers opened his eyes and Jericho saw tears there. "There's no way you can help, Mr. Jericho. I know of a multimillion-dollar drug deal that's about to come off. I thought I could break Grasso when it came about, but he got wind of me somehow and Shelley disappeared. If I go after her, or you go after her, or the cops go after her, she's dead, and I can't prove a thing."

"What if the whole community went after her?"

"They'd have to be alerted and Shelley would be dead before they could start."

"She's been missing for four days. How do you know she's still alive?"

"They put her on the phone to me."

"I just phoned you a little while ago and you didn't answer."

"They have a signal. They ring me, I don't answer. They ring right back and I know it's them. She's alive, Mr. Jericho. Scared out of her mind, but alive. Her only chance is silence, and no move against them."

"And when their big deal has taken place, they plan to let her go to tell the whole world what happened to her?"

The answer to that question was too obvious and too painful for Bowers to try to answer it. Shelley Perotti was not going to survive no matter what course he took.

The gimmicks involved in the hostage game were as familiar to Jericho as the rules of a long-forgotten kids' game—close your eyes and count to ten. In those ten seconds people disappeared. In the case of Shelley Perotti, it seemed almost certain she was going to stay lost. Holding her hostage might keep Ben Bowers from publishing his story about a drug deal, but there was no way she could be released afterward. Kept alive and in touch with Bowers, she

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could save the big drug deal. After that, the game for Shelley would be over.

Was there a way to get to the girl while she was still alive? They could raid Grasso's headquarters and Shelley would be dead before they could get to the room where she was being held. They could grab Grasso and offer an exchange—Grasso for Shelley. But that would be easier said than done. The police wouldn't involve themselves in a hostage-for-hostage scheme. And Jericho knew that his chances of kidnaping Grasso were almost zero. He had bodyguards everywhere and an army of gun-toting hoods. Jericho knew that if he or Bowers or someone in the Perotti family tried something heroic, their chances of surviving, let alone succeeding, were slim.

Was there a way in which the odds could be a little more in favor of Shelley? Shortly after leaving a shattered Ben Bowers, Jericho thought there might be. It was a way probably no one else on earth would have dreamed up—a unique, totally John Jericho way. In the early hours of the next morning he set it in motion.

Jericho was sitting in his dining alcove having his second cup of breakfast coffee when there was a sharp knock on the front door. Jericho's smile was tight-lipped as he got up and walked toward the door.

"Who is it?" he called out.

"Mike Grasso! I guess you know who I am, Jericho."

Jericho opened the door. Grasso stood there, smiling his professional smile, meant to charm. Behind him were two other men, whose hands weren't in their pockets to keep them warm.

"You collecting for the Red Cross, Grasso?" Jericho asked.

"I've got a problem that involves you in a way. Can I come in?"

"If you leave your soldiers out in the hall," said Jericho.

Grasso turned and gestured to the two men, who backed a little way down the hall. "My life insurance," he said to Jericho, who held the door open a little wider so the gangster could come in.

"I can't imagine a problem of yours that could involve me," Jericho told him.

"It's your painting," Grasso said. "The one behind the bar in my place."

"You don't like it?"

"I love it, Jericho. And that's the problem. Some jerk got into The Boat House last night after closing and smeared white paint all over it."

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"Someone who didn't like you, or someone who didn't like me?" Jericho asked.

"Either way, I don't want anyone to touch it until you see it," Grasso said. "I need to know from an expert whether that white paint can be washed off without damaging the picture underneath."

"I can tell you without looking," Jericho said. "If the white paint is water-based it can be washed away without damaging the oil painting underneath. If it's oil-based, you can't remove it without removing the painting under it."

"Will you come look?"

"Why not? I have a soft place in my heart for that mural—a good fight won a long time ago."

"I know," Grasso said. "I didn't know how lucky I was when I bought the place. Then I found out the mural's listed in the city guide books, a landmark. People from all over the country come in to have a look at it. Will you come look now?"

"Why not?" Jericho said.

The Boat House was only a few blocks away. Jericho, Grasso, and Grasso's "life insurance" walked it. The restaurant in Tim Sullivan's time had been a familiar haunt of Jericho's, a meeting place for friends who had fought together in a cause. Jericho's emotions had been strong when he painted the mural behind the bar and the result was startlingly vivid. Local people loved it because it recorded what had been their courage and determination. People from elsewhere came to see it because it was an extraordinary work of art.

But now it was smeared over by white paint that couldn't be removed without destroying the painting beneath it. Jericho knew that before he went behind the bar to examine the white paint. He knew because he had been the vandal who, in the early hours of the morning, had smeared it over the mural.

After going through the motions of examining it, he turned to Grasso.

"No hope, I'm afraid," he said. "It's oil-based. Remove it and you remove what's under it."

"Damn!" Grasso muttered.

"You can get a second opinion, of course," Jericho said. "But any artist will give you the same verdict, I'm afraid."

Grasso squared his shoulders, a man facing a new problem.

"Could you repaint it? From memory? Or maybe you have sketches of it?"

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"No way."

Grasso's smile was knowing. "I didn't mention a price, did I? You name it, I'll pay it."

"I'm afraid you don't understand my kind of artist, Grasso," Jericho said. "I'm not interested in painting something over again. You couldn't name a price that would tempt me to try. I could paint something new, something that's today—"

"Fine! A Jericho is a Jericho as far as the customers are concerned. How much will it cost me?"

"I'll paint something for the Jefferson Mews community just for the pleasure of it," Jericho said. "Hang a canvas where I won't be bothered by sidewalk superintendents while I'm working at it, invite the Jefferson Mews people in at dinnertime—say, seven o'clock?—and you'll have your new mural. But no peepers in the process. Understood?"

Grasso nodded. "Hell, I'll close the place until dinnertime," he said. Then: "Just one thing I want more than a new painting," he brooded, "is to find the son of a bitch who did this to the old one."

"How did he get in?" Jericho asked.

"It's a mystery," Grasso said. "No sign of a break-in anywhere. We figure he must have been in here as a customer, hid somewhere when we were closing up, and went to work after we left."

"I thought you lived here?"

"Oh, I do—top two floors. But I wouldn't have had any reason to come down here after we closed. The only answer is he hid himself and his paint somewhere and waited for all of us to turn in."

Jericho went back to his studio for materials. While he was gone, a canvas was hung from ceiling to floor in front of the destroyed mural in The Boat House bar. When Jericho returned, he gave last instructions to Grasso. There must be no curiosity hounds trying to look at the canvas while he was working or he would walk out on the job and that would be that. Then he went to work.

Most people who walk into a big city for the first time don't stop to think that it's really a collection of small communities. Jefferson Mews was one of New York's small communities, populated by three or more generations of people who had always lived there, knew each other well, raised their children together, and heard the same gossip. That day two stories were running through the Mews community like wind-driven brushfires. Someone had broken into The Boat House and wiped out John Jericho's famous mural, and Shelley

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Perotti had been missing for five days and her family and her newspaperman boy friend had concluded it might be something very serious.

Street kids asked each other questions. No one had heard any talk about anyone wiping out the mural in The Boat House. The kids weren't above vandalism, but it was unlikely they would play games with Mike Grasso—he was too dangerous, and he had too many ears to the ground. Shelley Perotti was a graver concern. Strangers did walk the streets and she was an attractive girl. The whole community was alerted, searching for some spot of information about her.

And so the day wore on, Jericho working on the new canvas in total privacy, the rest of the community busy with their own work while they speculated about the vandalism and the girl's disappearance.

By the time The Boat House opened for dinner and the unveiling of the cloth-covered new mural, people from the Mews began to crowd into the bar. It was going to be bonanza night at the cash register. Mike Grasso was all smiles and handshakes. The talk was mostly speculation about what Jericho might have chosen as a subject for the new mural and if there was any news about Shelley Perotti. Had anyone come up with anything in the course of the day?

Just before seven o'clock, the sheeting over the canvas behind the bar was lifted at the bottom and Jericho emerged. "For better or worse," he said to Mike Grasso.

Grasso hammered on the bar with a glass, asking for silence. "Mr. Jericho tells us he's ready!" he called out.

Several hundred people faced the covered mural, waiting eagerly. Slowly the cloth was pulled up, and first the bottom and then the whole picture was revealed. A shocked murmur ran over the crowd of spectators.

Jericho had painted a picture of Shelley Perotti. She was sitting in a chair, her arms tied behind her back. Standing behind her was a man, unmistakably Mike Grasso, holding a glittering straight razor to her throat. Over Shelley's head was a balloon with the words, "I'm here in The Boat House—come look for me!"

The murmur of voices rose to a bedlam of sound, people yelling, shouting, running from room to room, upstairs and down. Jericho was left alone to face Mike Grasso, whose face was suddenly the color of ashes. Grasso's hand came out of his pocket. In it was a handgun. Jericho, moving with the grace of a ballet dancer, launched

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a vicious karate kick at Grasso's jaw. Grasso went down, the gun sliding away from him across the floor. Jericho grabbed it and the tables were turned.

"She'd better be all right," Jericho said, "or I'll have shot you in self-defense."

Excited voices returned, announcing that Shelley had been found. Some men took charge of Grasso until the police arrived. Then, not only were the police there, but the Perotti family and Ben Bowers. They surrounded Shelley, who had been brought downstairs, looking pale but beatifically happy.

Bowers came over to Jericho.

"What can I say?"

"How is she?"

"How would you be if you were suddenly rescued from certain death?" Bowers asked. "That's how she feels. How can I thank you?"

And Jericho found himself shamelessly embraced by the overwhelmed younger man.

Jericho faced Lieutenant Donovan of the local police precinct across the policeman's desk.

"There's enough cocaine in that basement to hook the whole city," Donovan said. "Big deal was to take place tomorrow, we learned. But how did you get in to destroy your original mural?"

"Grasso's a smart operator, but like most smart guys he missed something at a time when he should have been more careful. When I was working on the original mural, Tim Sullivan supplied me with a key to the basement so I could come and go at will. I never returned it. I was never asked for it. When Grasso took over, he didn't bother to change the lock. He supposed he had all the keys. I'd forgotten myself I had one until yesterday. I didn't know it still worked till I tried it."

"You didn't look for the girl when you went in?"

"And risk her life—and mine?"

"You have to be a little bit crazy, Jericho," Donovan said.

Jericho grinned at him.

"You didn't warn anyone about what you planned? Bowers? Nobody?"

"There's an old saying from the last war," Jericho said. " 'Loose lips sink ships.' I don't trust *anyone* with a secret when it's a matter of life or death."

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first publication in the U.S.

This wasn't the first time Lee had been hurt by lies. And what had those who had lied so grievously to him gained?

Enter Patricia Highsmith's special world, one Graham Greene called "claustrophobic and irrational." "Under a Dark Angel's Eye" is from a collection of the author's stories, The Black House, *to be published here late this year by The Mysterious Press . . .*

UNDER A DARK ANGEL'S EYE

by PATRICIA HIGHSMITH

Now he was on the last leg of his journey, the bus stretch from the airport to Arlington Hills. There would be nobody to meet him at the bus terminal, and Lee didn't mind in the least. In fact, he preferred it. He could walk with his small suitcase the four or five blocks to the Capitol Hotel (he assumed it was still functioning), check in, then telephone Winston Greeves to say he had arrived. Maybe they could even wind up the business with the lawyer today, because it would be only four in the afternoon by the time Lee would be phoning Winston. It was a matter of signing a paper in regard to the house where Lee Mandeville had been born. Lee owned it, and now he had to sell it because he needed the money. He didn't care, he wasn't sentimental about the two-storey white house with the green lawn in front. Or was he? Lee honestly didn't think so. He'd had some nasty, unpleasant hours in that house, as well as a few happy ones—a barefoot boyhood, tossing a football with chums from the neighborhood on the front lawn. He had lost Louise there, too.

Lee shifted in his seat, rested his cheek against his hand, which was lightly closed in a fist, and stared out the window at the Indiana landscape that drifted past. He barely recognized a small town they

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were going through. How long had it been, nine—no, ten years since he had been to Arlington Hills. Ten years ago he had come to visit his mother in the nursing home called the Hearthside, and she had either not recognized him or pretended not to, or had really thought he was someone else. At any rate, she had managed to come out with "Don't come back!" just as he had been going out the door of her room. Winston, who had accompanied Lee, had chuckled and shaken his head as if to say, "What can you do with the old folks—except put up with them?"

Yes, they lived on forever these days. Doctors didn't let old people die, not as long as there were pills, injections, kidney machines, new drugs, all costing dearly. That was why Lee had to sell the house. For twelve years, since his mother had entered the nursing home, the house had been rented to a couple whose two children were in their teens now. Lee had never charged them much rent, because they couldn't afford a high rent and Lee valued their reliability. But Lee's mother was now costing between five and six hundred dollars a week, her savings had run out five years ago, and Lee had borne the burden ever since, though Medicare paid some of it. His mother Edna wasn't ill, but she did need certain pills, tranquilizers alternating with pickups, plus checkups and special vitamins.

Lee paid little attention to his mother's health because it stayed the same year after year. She was ambulant but crotchety, and never wrote to Lee because he didn't write to her. Even before the nursing home, she had cursed Lee out by letter for imaginary faults and deeds, so Lee had washed his hands of his mother except to pay her bills. An offspring owed that to a parent, Lee believed, just as a parent owed to a child love, care, and as much education as the parent could afford. Children were expensive and time-consuming, but the parents certainly were repaid when they became elderly and imposed the same burdens on their children.

Lee Mandeville was fifty-five, unmarried, and had a modestly successful antique shop in Chicago. He dealt in old furniture, a few good carpets, old pictures and frames, brass and silver items, and silverware also. He was by no means a big wheel in the antique business, but he was known and respected in Chicago and beyond. He was trim of figure, not balding, and without much grey in his hair. His face was clean-shaven, with a crease in either cheek, and he had rather heavy eyebrows above friendly, thoughtful, blue-grey eyes. He liked meeting strangers in his shop, summing them up, finding out whether they wanted to buy something because it would

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look nice somewhere in their house or because they really fell in love with an object.

As the bus rocked and lumbered into Arlington Hills, Lee tensed himself, already uneasy and unhappy. Well, he did not intend to see his mother this trip. He didn't want to see her and he didn't have to. She was so far gone mentally that Lee had had power of attorney for nearly ten years. Winston had at last obtained his mother's signature for that. She had held out for months, not for any logical reason but out of stubbornness, and because she enjoyed making difficulties for other people. Twenty minutes to four, Lee saw from a glance at his wristwatch. He stood up and hauled his suitcase down from the rack before the bus had quite stopped.

"Lee! —How *are* you, Lee?"

Lee was surprised by the voice, and it took him a second to spot Win in the little crowd waiting for debarkers. "Win! *Hello*! I didn't expect to see you here!" Lee's smile was broad. They patted each other on the shoulder. "How're things?"

"Oh—much the same," Win replied. "Nothing much changes around here. That's all the luggage you've got? . . . My car's over here, Lee—and Kate and I expect you to be *our guest*. All right?"

Win already had Lee's suitcase in his hand. Win was in his early sixties with straight grey hair that looked always windblown. He wore navy-blue trousers and a blue shirt with no tie. Win was head of an insurance company that he himself had founded and the Mandevilles had insured their house and cars with Win for decades.

"It's kind of you, Win, but honestly, for one night I can just as well stay at the old Capitol, you know." Lee didn't want to say that he preferred to go to a hotel.

"Won't hear of it. Kate's got your room all ready."

Win was walking toward his car, and Lee went with him. After all, Win had been helpful, very, with Edna, and Win seemed really pleased to have him. "You win, Win," Lee said, smiling, "and thank you. How's Kate? And Mort? " Mort was their son.

"Oh—the same." Win stuck Lee's lightweight suitcase onto the back seat of his car. "Mort's working now in Bloomington. Car salesman."

"Still married?" Lee recalled some awful trouble with Mort's wife—she'd run off with another man, abandoned their small child, and then, Lee thought, they had got back together again.

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"No, they finally arranged a—a divorce," Win said, and started the car.

Lee didn't know whether to say "Good" or not, so he said nothing. Now his mother, Lee thought. That was the next question. He didn't care how his mother was. Instead, Lee said, "I was thinking we might wind this business up this afternoon, Win. It's just a matter of signing a paper, isn't it?" The house in Barrett Avenue was sold, to a young couple named Varick—Ralph and Phyllis, Lee remembered from the real-estate agent's letter.

"Ye–es," said Win, and his heavy hands opened on the steering wheel for a couple of seconds, then closed tightly. "I suppose we could."

Lee gathered that Win hadn't made an appointment as yet. "It's still old Graham, isn't it? He knows us both so well—can't we just barge in?"

"Sure—okay, Lee."

Win Greeves steered the car into Main Street and Lee glanced at storefronts, shop signs, seeing a lot of change since he had been here last, and for the worse aesthetically. Main Street looked more crowded, both with people and shops. Maybe Graham's old office hadn't changed. Douglas Graham was a lawyer and notary public. He had drawn up a power-of-attorney statement years ago, at Lee's request, so that Lee could sign checks for his mother's bills, and Winston Greeves' name had been added also in executor capacity, because Win was on the scene in Arlington Hills, and even visited his mother sometimes—though his mother didn't always recognize him, Win said—and in the last years, as Edna's bank account had grown low, Lee sent five hundred dollars or a thousand to bolster it every month or so. Win sent Lee the bank statements for the account now in Lee's name, and an explanation of the bills.

"I don't need the Varicks, I suppose," Lee said. "To be present when I sign, I mean."

"I know Ralph Varick's already signed," said Win. "Fine couple, those two. You should meet them, Lee."

"Well—not really necessary. Give them my best wishes—if you ever see them." Lee didn't want to go near the old house, didn't want to see it. The nice family, the Youngs, who couldn't afford to buy the house, were still there for the rest of this month, but Lee didn't want to visit them, even merely to say hello. He felt sorry for them. He forced himself to ask the unavoidable. "And I suppose my mother's just the same, too?"

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Win chuckled and shook his head. "She's—yes—that's about it."

Don't they *ever* kick the bucket, Lee thought bitterly, and nearly laughed at himself. And after he had banked the money for the house, how much longer, how many more years would his mother live, eating up five or six hundred dollars a week? Now she was eighty-six. Couldn't she go on till ninety and ninety-one? Why not? Lee remembered three grandparents out of four, plus one maternal uncle, who had all died in their nineties.

"Here we are," said Win, pulling in at the curb.

Lee fished for a coin and dropped it in the meter before Win could insert his. Doug Graham had no secretary, and came out of the office himself in response to the bell they had rung on entering his waiting room.

"Well, Lee—and Win. How are you, Lee? You're looking well." Doug Graham gave Lee a warm handshake. Doug was heavier than he had been ten years ago, in his late sixties now, a big man in a baggy beige suit that showed no sign of a proper crease.

"Quite all right, Doug. And you?" Lee wished he could have said friendlier words, but they didn't come for some reason. Doug had done many a service for Lee and his mother over the years. Lee remembered with embarrassment that Doug had talked his mother out of making a will some twenty years ago which would have cut Lee out as only offspring and nearest of kin and bestowed all on a young black woman who cleaned the house and had talked her way into Edna's affections.

Doug Graham quietly and calmly arranged the few papers on his desk and pointed out where Lee was to sign. "After you've read the agreement, of course, Lee," said Doug with a smile.

Lee glanced through. It was a bill of sale for the Barrett Avenue house, pretty plain and simple. Lee signed. The deed was there, too, with Lee's father's signature, and also that of Lee's grandfather, but before that a name that was not of the family. Ralph David Varick was the last name. Lee didn't have to sign this.

"Hope you're not too sentimental about it, Lee," said Doug in his slow, deep voice. "After all, you're not here much of late—in the last years. We've missed you."

Lee shook his head. "Not sentimental, no."

The pen was handed to Winston Greeves, who got up to sign the purchase paper as witness.

"Sorry it has to be, though," said Doug, "somehow. And sorry about your mother."

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Again Lee felt a twinge of shame, because Doug knew, everyone knew, that his mother was not merely senile but quietly insane. "Well—these things happen. At least she's not in pain," Lee said awkwardly.

"That *is* true . . . Thank you, Win. And that about winds it up, I think . . . How long're you here for, Lee?"

Lee told him just till tomorrow, because he had to get back to his shop in Chicago. He asked what he owed Doug, and Doug said nothing at all, and again Lee felt shame because Doug must know that he had sold the house because he couldn't otherwise meet expenses.

"We need a little drink on this," said Doug, pulling out a whisky bottle from a lower drawer in his desk. "It's just about quitting time, anyway, so we deserve it."

They each had small, neat drinks, standing up. But the atmosphere remained sad and a little strained, Lee felt.

Ten minutes later, they were at the Greeves house—bigger than the house Lee had just signed away, with a bigger lawn and more expensive trees. Kate Greeves welcomed Lee as if he were one of the family, pressing his hand in both hers, kissing his cheek.

"Lee, I'm so glad Win persuaded you to stay! Come, I'll show you your room, then we can relax."

She took him upstairs. There was a smell of baking and of warm cinnamon from the kitchen. His room was neat and clean, furnished with factory-made dressing table and chairs and bed, but Lee had seen worse. The Greeveses were doing their best to be nice to him.

"I'd love to take a little walk," Lee said when he went back downstairs. "Hardly six. Still a lot of daylight—"

"Oh, no! Stay and talk, Lee. Or I'll *drive* you around, if you'd like to see the old town." Win seemed willing.

But that idea didn't appeal to Lee. He wanted to stretch his legs on his own, but he knew Win would protest that he'd have to walk fifteen minutes to get out of Rosedale, the residential section, and so on and so on. Lee found himself sitting in the living room with a strong scotch in his hands. Kate brought in a bowl of hot buttered popcorn.

The telephone rang and the Greeveses exchanged a look, then Win went to get it in the hall.

Lee picked up an old glass paperweight with a spread blue butterfly in it. The paperweight was the size of a cake of soap and very

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pretty. He was about to ask Kate where she had got it from when Win's voice saying *"No!"* made Lee keep his silence.

"*No*, I said," Win said softly but in a tone of repressed wrath. "And don't phone again tonight. I mean what I *say*," There was a click as Win put the telephone down.

When he returned to the living room, his hands were shaking slightly. He reached for his glass. "Sorry about that," he said to Lee with a nervous smile.

Something to do with Mort, Lee supposed. Maybe Mort himself. Lee thought it best not to ask questions. Kate also looked tense. Mort must be at least forty now, Lee thought. He was a weak type. Lee remembered one adolescent scrape after another—a wrecked car, Mort picked up by the police for drunkenness somewhere, Mort marrying a girl because she was pregnant, the same wife Mort had just divorced, Win had said. Such troubles seemed silly to Lee because they were so avoidable—compared to a deranged mother who lingered on and on.

"Not coming over, is he?" Kate whispered to Win as she bent to offer Win the popcorn bowl.

Win shook his head slowly and grimly.

Lee had barely heard Kate speak. They talked of other things during dinner, and only a little bit about Lee's mother. Her health was all right, she took walks in the garden there, came down to the dining room for every meal. Once a month there was a birthday party for everyone whose birthday fell during that month. There was TV—not in every room, but in the communal hall downstairs.

"She still reads the Bible, I suppose," said Lee, smiling a little.

"Oh, I suppose. There's one in every room there, I know," Win replied, and glanced at his wife, who responded by asking Lee how his shop in Chicago was doing.

As Lee replied, he thought about his mother, grim-lipped and gruesome without her false teeth, which she didn't always care to wear, reading her Bible. What did she get out of it? Certainly not the milk of human kindness—but of course that phrase was Shakespeare's. Or had Jesus said it first? The Old Testament was bloodthirsty, vengeful, even barbaric in places. His mother had always, or frequently enough, said to him, "Read your Bible, Lee," when he was depressed, discouraged, or when he had been "tempted" maybe to buy a nice-looking second-hand car on the instalment plan when he had been seventeen or eighteen.

How innocent, buying a car on the instalment plan, compared to

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what his mother had done when he was twenty-two! He had been engaged to Louisa Watts, madly in love with her, in love in a way, however, that could have lasted, that would have resulted in a good marriage, Lee believed. His mother had told Louisa that Lee had girls everywhere, prostitute favorites, too—that in his car he drove to other towns for his fun. And so on. And Louisa had been only nineteen. She had believed that, and she had been hurt. God damn my mother, Lee thought. And what had his mother gained by her lies? Keeping him at home, for herself? She hadn't. Louisa had married another man in less than a year, moved somewhere—maybe New York —and Lee had left home and gone to San Francisco for a while, worked as a longshoreman, gone to New Orleans and done the same. If Louisa only hadn't been married, he would have tried again with her because she was the only girl in the world for him. Yes, he had met other girls, four or five. He had wanted to marry, but had never been able to convince himself (and maybe not the other girls, either) that marriage would work. Then he had gone to Chicago when he had been nearly thirty.

"You don't like the pie, Lee?" asked Kate.

Lee realized that he had barely touched the hot apple pie, that he was squeezing his napkin in his left hand as if it were someone's neck. "I do like the pie," he said calmly and proceeded to finish it.

That night, Lee slept badly. Thoughts turned in his head, yet when he tried to devote a few minutes to thinking something out, he got nowhere. It was a pleasure for him to get out of bed at dawn, dress quietly, and sneak down the stairs for a walk before anyone else was up. He hadn't bothered shaving. Lee was out of the Rosedale area in less than ten minutes. The air was sweet and clear, coolish for May. The town was awakening. There were milk trucks making deliveries, mailmen of course, and a few workmen boarding early buses.

"Lee? —It's Lee Mandeville, isn't it?"

Lee looked into the face of a young man in his twenties with brown wavy hair, in a tweed suit with shirt and tie. Vaguely Lee remembered the face, but couldn't have come up with the name if his life had depended on it.

"Charles Ritchie!" said the young man, laughing. "Remember? I used to deliver groceries for your mother!"

"Oh, *sure*. Charlie." Lee smiled, remembering a skinny twelve-

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year-old who sometimes drank a soda pop in their kitchen. "Hey, aren't you missing your bus, Charlie?"

"Doesn't matter," said the young man, barely glancing at the bus that was pulling away. "What brings you here, Lee?"

"Selling the house. You remember the old house?"

"I sure do! I'm sorry you're selling. I had the idea you might move back sometime—for retirement or something."

Lee smiled. "I need the money, frankly. My mother's still alive, you know, and that costs a little. Not that I begrudge it, of course." He saw Charlie's face grow suddenly earnest.

Frowning, Charlie said, "I don't understand. Mrs. Mandeville died fo—no, about five years ago. Yes, I—*I* went to her funeral, Lee." His eyes stared into Lee's.

Lee realized that it was true. He realized that this was why Win had insisted upon Lee spending the night with him—so he wouldn't run into citizens of the town who might tell him the truth.

"What's the matter, sir? I'm sorry I brought it up. But *you* said—"

Lee gently took his elbow from the young man's grip and smiled. "Sorry. I suppose I looked about to faint! *Yes*." Lee took a breath and made an effort to pull himself together. "Yes, of course she's dead. I don't know what I was talking about, Charlie."

"Oh, that's *okay*, Lee. —You're really all right?"

"Sure, I'm all right. And that's another bus coming, isn't it?"

Through a haze of pale-yellow morning sunlight and pale-green leaves, the bus approached. Lee moved away, waved goodbye, ignoring Charlie's parting words.

Lee walked slowly for several minutes, not caring in what direction his steps took him.

Now he realized that the Hearthside people, the accountant there or someone, must be in league with Win Greeves, because Lee had seen real bills from the Hearthside in the last five years. Lee felt himself physically weak, as if he were walking in mud instead of on a cement pavement. And what the hell was he going to do about it? Five years. And in dollars? Twenty or twenty-four thousand dollars a year times five were—Lee smiled wryly and stopped trying to calculate. He looked up at a streetmarker and saw that he stood on a corner at which Elmhurst intersected South Billingham. He took Elmhurst, which he thought led eastward, back to Rosedale. All he really wanted from the Greeves house was his suitcase.

When Lee got back to the house, he found the door unlocked, and

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noticed an aroma of coffee and bacon. Win came at once down the hall.

"Lee! We were a little worried! Thought maybe you'd sleepwalked right out of the house!" Win was grinning.

"No, no, just taking a walk—as I wanted to do last night." Win was staring at him. Was he pale, Lee wondered. Probably. Lee realized that he could still be polite. That was easy. It was also safe and natural to him. "Hope I didn't hold you up, Win." Lee looked at his wristwatch. "Ten of eight now."

"Not—one—bit!" Win assured him. "Come and have some breakfast."

Now the food really refused to go down, but Lee kept his polite manner, sipped coffee, and poked at his scrambled eggs. He saw Win and Kate exchange glances again, glances that Win tried to avoid, though his eyes kept being drawn back to his wife's as if he were hypnotized.

"Did you—uh—have a nice walk, Lee?" Win asked.

"Very nice, thanks. I ran into—Charles Ritchie," Lee said carefully and with some respect, as if Charles had been lifted from a grocer's delivery boy to the status of one of the disciples bearing a message of truth. "He used to deliver groceries for my mother." Lee noticed that Win was not doing much better than he with his breakfast.

The tension grew a few degrees tighter, then Kate said:

"Win said you wanted to leave today, Lee. Can't you change your mind?"

That remark was so false, Lee suddenly blew up inwardly. But outwardly he kept his cool, except that he tossed his napkin down. "Sorry, but I can't. No." His voice was hollow and hoarse. He stood up. "If you'll excuse me." He left the table and went up to his room.

Just as he was closing his suitcase, Win came in. Now Win looked white in the face and ten years older. Lee felt almost sorry for him.

"Yes, I heard about my mother. I think that's what's on your mind, isn't it, Win?" Lee had his small suitcase in his hand and he was ready to leave the room.

Win tiptoed to the door and closed it. The hand that he drew away from the doorknob was shaking and he lifted it with his other hand to cover his face.

"Lee, I want you to know I'm ashamed of myself."

Lee nodded once, impatiently, unseen by Win.

"Morton was in such trouble. That damned wife of his . . . She

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hasn't turned loose, there's no divorce, and it's a damned mess. The girl—I mean the wife—is pregnant again and she's accusing Mort now, but I doubt if that's true, I really do. But she keeps asking for money, and legally—"

"Who the hell cares?" Lee interrupted. He squeezed the suitcase handle, eager to leave, but Win blocked him like an ugly mountain. His eyes, wide and scared, met Lee's. He reminded Lee of an animal, sure that it was going to be slaughtered in the next seconds, but in fact Lee had never seen an animal in such circumstances. "I suppose," Lee said, "the nursing home had some kind of understanding with you. I remember the bills, anyway—recent ones."

Win said miserably, "Yes, yes."

Now Lee recalled Doug Graham's words to him when Lee had said that at least his mother wasn't in pain now—Doug had replied that that was true. Doug knew that his mother was dead, but their conversation wouldn't have caused him to repeat that fact, and of course he had assumed Lee knew it. Lee made a start for the door.

"Lee!" Win nearly caught him by the sleeve, but he drew his hand back as if he didn't dare touch Lee. "What're you going to do, Lee?"

"I don't know—I think I'm in a state of shock."

"I know I'm to blame. Just me. But if you only knew the straits I was in, *am* in. Blackmail—first from Mort's wife, blackmailing him, I mean, and now—"

Lee understood: Mort the son was now blackmailing his father about this business. How low could human beings sink? For some bizarre reason, Lee wanted to smile. "How did she die?" he asked in a courteous tone. "Stroke, I suppose?"

"Died in her sleep," Win murmured. "Hardly anybody came to the funeral. She'd made such enemies, y'know, with her sharp tongue. The man—"

"What man?" Lee asked, because Win had stopped.

"The man at the Hearthside. His name is Victor Malloway. He's—you could say he's every bit as guilty as I am. But he's the only one—else." Again Win looked pitiably at Lee. "What're you going to do, Lee?"

Lee took a breath. "Well—what, for instance?" Win did not reply to that question, and Lee opened the door. "Bye-bye, Win, and thanks."

Downstairs, Lee said the same thanks and goodbye to Kate. The words she said did not register on Lee. Something about taking him

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to the bus terminal or calling a taxi. "Quite all right," Lee heard himself saying. "I'll make it by myself."

He was gone, free, alone, walking with the suitcase in the direction of town, of the bus terminal. He walked all the way at an easy and regular pace, arrived at the terminal around ten, and waited patiently for the bus to the bigger town with the airport. He still felt dazed, but thoughts came anyway. They were bitter, unhappy thoughts that flowed through his mind like a polluted stream. He detested his thoughts.

And even on the moving bus, his thoughts went on, memories of his mother's odious vanity when she had been younger, her henpecking of his father (dead in his late fifties of cancer), her unremitting dislike and criticism of every girl he had ever brought to the house. Also his mother's backbiting at her own friends and neighbors, even at the ones who tried to be friendly and kind to her. His mother had always found something wrong with them. And now, the truly awful thing, the terrifying fact that her life had wound up like a classic tragedy played rather behind the scenes instead of on a stage in view of lots of people. His mother had been finished off, as it were, by a few shabby crooks like Win Greeves and son, and the fellow called Victor—Mallory, was it? Indeed, they had been feeding like vultures on her rotting corpse for the past five years.

Lee did not relax until he had opened the front door of his antique shop and surveyed the familiar interior of shining furniture, the warm glint of copper, the soft curves of polished cherrywood. He left the CLOSED sign hanging in the door and relocked it from the inside. He must return to normal, he told himself, must carry on as usual and forget Arlington Hills or he would become ill himself—polluted, like his river of ugly memories on the bus and on the plane. He bathed and shaved and by five in the afternoon removed his CLOSED sign. He had one visitor after that, a man who drifted around looking and didn't buy anything, but that was no matter.

Only occasionally, in moments when he was tired or disappointed about something that had gone wrong, did Lee think of the false friend Win, and wish him ill. *An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth*, the Bible said—the Old Testament part, anyway. But he really *didn't* want that, Lee told himself, otherwise he would be doing something now to bring Win Greeves to justice, to hit back at him. Lee could even sue him and win handily, recover expenses and then some by forcing the Greeveses to sell their handsome house in Rosedale. With

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that money, he could buy his own house back, his birthplace. But Lee realized that he didn't want the two-storey white house where he had been born. His mother's spirit had spoiled that house, made it evil.

From Win Greeves there was silence, not a letter or a line from him of further explanation, or of an offer to repay part of what he had wrongly taken. Now and then, Lee did imagine Win worried, probably very anxious as he tried to guess what Lee might be doing about the situation. Nearly a month had passed since Lee's visit to Arlington Hills. Wouldn't Win and Kate and Mort be assuming that Lee Mandeville had taken a lawyer and that he was preparing his case against Winston Greeves and the man at the Hearthside?

Then Lee received, to his surprise, a letter from Arlington Hills, addressed by typewriter and with Win's company's name Eagle Insurance and the spread-eagle trademark in the upper left corner of the envelope. Lee turned the envelope over—no name on the back—and for a few seconds wondered what might be in it. An abject apology, maybe even a check, however small? Absurd! Or was Eagle Insurance sending him a last bill for his mother's house insurance? Lee laughed at this idea and opened the letter. It was a short typewritten note.

Dear Lee,

After all our troubles, there is one more. Mort died last Tuesday night, after running into a man and seriously injuring him (but not killing him, thank God) and then hitting a tree in his car himself. I can almost say it's a blessing, considering the trouble Mort has caused himself and us. I thought you might like to hear. We are all sad here.

Yours,
Win

Lee gave a sigh, a shrug. Well. What was he supposed to reply, or think, or care, about this? Was Win possibly expecting a letter of condolence from him? This piece of information, Lee thought, affected him not at all. Morton Greeves's life or death was simply nothing to Lee.

Later that day, when Lee was tugging off rubber boots and feeling a bit tired—he had been paint-stripping with a water hose in his back alley—he had a vision of Mort dead and bleeding, having hit a tree in his car, and thought, Good! *An eye for an eye . . .* For a few seconds he relished a vengeance achieved. Morton was Win's only son, only child. Worthless all his life, and now dead. Good! Now Lee

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had his money for the Arlington Hills house he had sold, and he could, if he wished, buy a property he had looked at in a suburb of Chicago, a pleasant house near the lake. He could have a little boat.

An image of his mother came to Lee as he undressed for bed that night, his mother in her big wicker rocking chair in the living room, reading her Bible, peering up at him grim-mouthed (though with her teeth) and asking him why he didn't read the Bible more often. The Bible! Had it made his mother any better, kinder to her fellow men? A lot of the Bible seemed to be anti-sex, too. His mother was, certainly. If sex was so bad, Lee thought, how had his mother ever conceived him, ever got married in the first place?

"No," Lee said aloud, and shook himself as if he were shaking something off. No, he wasn't going to entertain any thoughts of the Bible, or of vengeance, in regard to Win's family, or in regard to the man at the Hearthside whose name by now Lee had forgotten, except for the first name Victor. What kind of Victor was he, for instance? Lee smiled at the absurdity of his name, the vainglorious ring of it.

Lee had a few friends in the neighborhood, and one of them, Edward Newton, a man of Lee's age and owner of a nearby bookshop, dropped in on Lee one afternoon as he often did, to have a coffee in the back of the shop. Lee had told Edward and others of his friends that his mother had been ill when he visited Arlington Hills, and that she had died a few days after his visit. Now Edward had found a small item in the newspaper.

"Did you know him? I thought I'd show it to you, because I remember the name Hearthside, where your mother was." Edward pointed to an item three inches long in the newspaper he had brought.

SUICIDE OF NURSING HOME
SUPERINTENDENT, 61

The report said that Victor C. Malloway, superintendent of the Hearthside retirement and nursing home in Arlington Hills, Indiana, had killed himself by closing his car and piping in the exhaust from a running engine in his own garage at home. He left no note of explanation. He was survived by a wife, Mary, a son Philip, a daughter Marion, and three grandchildren.

"No," Lee said. "I never met him, but I've heard his name."

"I suppose it's a depressing atmosphere—old people, you know. And *they're* dying pretty frequently there, I'd suppose."

Lee agreed, and changed the subject.

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Win was next, Lee supposed. What would happen to him, or what would he do to himself? Maybe nothing, after all. His own son was dead, and how much of that death might be called suicide, Lee wondered. Surely Mort had known from Win that the game was up, that no more money would be coming from Lee Mandeville. Surely, too, Win and Victor Malloway would have had a couple of desperate conversations. Lee still remembered Win's defeated and terrified face in that upstairs bedroom in Arlington Hills. Enough was enough, Lee thought. Win was a half destroyed man now.

With some of his money, Lee invested in ten Turkish carpets whose quality and colors especially pleased him. He was sure he could sell five or six at a profit, and he put a sign in his window to the effect that an exceptional opportunity to buy quality Turkish carpets was now offered, inquire within. The ones he did not sell would go well in the house in the suburbs on which he had put a down payment.

Lee felt increasingly happy. He gave a birthday party on his own birthday, invited ten friends out to a restaurant, then took them back to his apartment and turned on the lights in his shop. One of his friends played on a piano that Lee had in his shop section, and there was a lot of laughter because the piano was slightly out of tune. Everyone sang and drank champagne and toasted Lee's health.

He began to furnish his new house, which was smaller than the Arlington Hills house of his family but still had two storeys and a lovely fruit garden around it. It was almost thirty miles from Lee's shop, so he did not drive there every day but used the place mainly for weekends, though the distance was not so great that he couldn't drive in the evening to stay the night there if he chose. Now and again he thought, with a shock, of his mother and the fact that she had been dead nearly *six* years, not the eight or ten months that he had told all his friends. And he thought without a tweak of resentment of the hundred thousand dollars or so down the drain, money which Win had pocketed and shared with Mort and the suicide Victor. The score had been evened. A score, yes, like the score in a game that Lee was not interested in—a domino score, an anagram-game score. Best to forget it. All deaths were sad. Lee had not lifted a finger, yet Mort and Victor were dead. It had not been necessary to gouge out an eye.

Autumn came, and Lee was busy with weatherstripping in his house when he heard a news item that caught his attention. He had

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heard the name Arlington Hills, but he had missed the first part. It was something about the death of a man in his own house due to a bullet wound possibly self-inflicted. Lee worked on, feeling vaguely troubled. Could Winston Greeves have been the name the announcer had said? The news would be repeated in an hour, unless something more important crowded out the Arlington Hills bit. Lee continued measuring his insulating tape, cutting, sticking down. He worked on his knees in blue jeans.

If this were Win Greeves, it was really too much, Lee thought. Enough vengeance. More than enough. Well, there were lots of people in Arlington Hills, and maybe it hadn't been Win. But Lee felt troubled, angry in a strange way, and nervous. The minutes crept as Lee worked, and when five P.M. came, Lee listened carefully to the news report. It was the last item before the weather: Winston Greeves, aged sixty-four, of Arlington Hills, Indiana, had died from a bullet wound that might or might not have been self-inflicted. His wife said that he had recently acquired a pistol for target practice.

Lee had listened to the news standing, and suddenly his shoulders bent and he lowered his head. He felt weak for a few seconds, then gradually his strength returned, and with it the strange anger that he had known an hour ago. It was too much. He was about to cover his face with his hands, when he remembered Win making the same gesture. Lee took his hands down and straightened. He went down the stairs to his living room.

To the left and right of his fireplace there were bookshelves set into the wall. He reached firmly for a black leatherbound book. This was the Bible, the same one his mother had used to read, with the top and bottom of its spine all worn and showing brown where the black had worn off the leather. Lee quickly found where the Old Testament left off and the New Testament began, and he seized the thicker Old in his left hand and tore it from the binding. He thrust it like something unclean away from him and into the fireplace, where there was no fire now, and he wiped his left hand on the side of his blue jeans. The pages had all spilled apart, thin and dry. Lee struck a match.

He watched the pages burn and become even more gossamery and quite black, and he knew he had accomplished nothing. This was not the only Old Testament in the world. He had made an angry gesture to satisfy only himself. And he felt not at all satisfied, or cleansed, or rid of anything.

A letter of condolence to Kate Greeves, Lee thought, was due. Yes,

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he would write it this evening. Why not now? Words came to his mind as he moved toward the table where he kept his paper and pens. A longhand letter, of course. Kate had lost her son and her husband in a span of only a few months.

Dear Kate,

By accident this afternoon I heard on my radio the sad news about Win. I can realize that it is an awful blow to receive so shortly after the death of Morton. I would like you to know that I send you my sincerest sympathies now and that I can appreciate your grief . . .

Lee wrote on smoothly and slowly. The curious thing was that he did feel sympathy for Kate. He bore her no grievance at all, though she was a partner to her husband in his deception. She was, somehow, a separate entity. This fact transcended guilt or the necessity to forgive. Lee signed his name. He meant every word of the letter.

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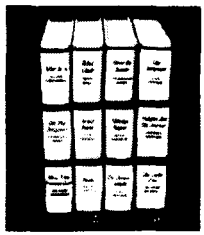

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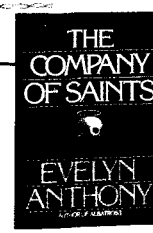

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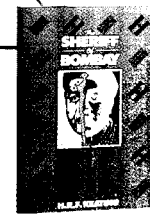

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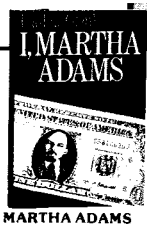

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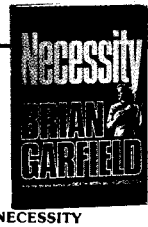

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